LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 20
NOVEMBER 2018
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"THE MOST SPONTANEOUS ALBUM I'VE BEEN A PART OF"

LOVING THE ALIEN

DAVID BOWIE
1983-1988
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WITH NILE RODGERS, CARLOS ALOMAR, REEVES GABRELS & HUGH PADGHAM

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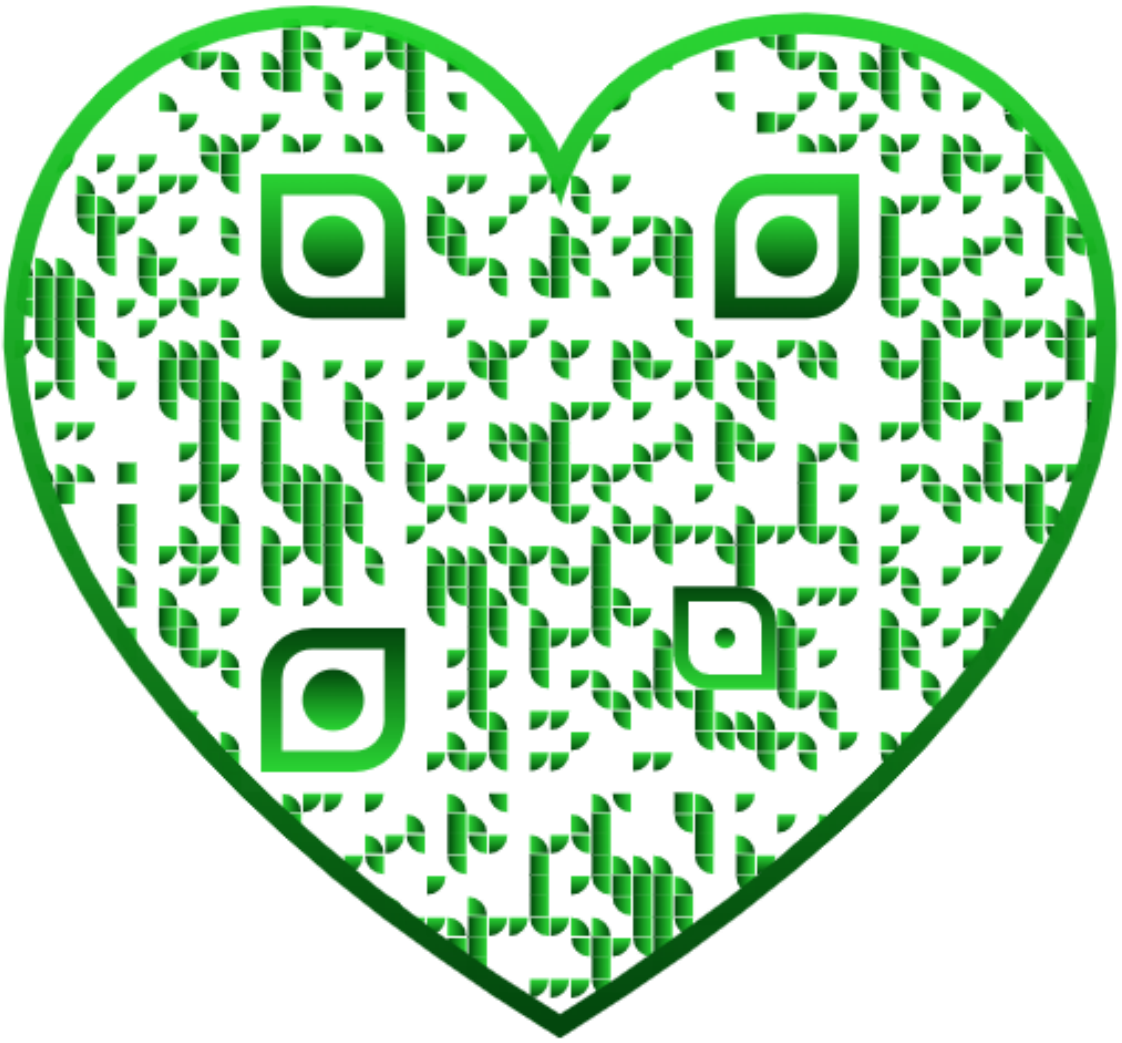

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Welcome...

"I knew at some point I was going to cry. I start playing, and I could hear David's guitar in my left ear and mine in my right. When David played acoustic, he'd get a certain look in his eyes, like he was looking at you but far away at the same time. He'd cross one of his legs, and his foot would bounce while he was playing. I could picture all of that and fell into that same headspace David and I always had but, when I opened my eyes, he wasn't there."

It's difficult to fully appreciate the gamut of emotions Reeves Gabrels must have wrestled with as he added fresh acoustic guitar parts to the *Never Let Me Down 2018* version of David Bowie's *Zeroes*, overseen by producer Mario McNulty. Bowie had been left disappointed with both the production and his own contribution to *Never Let Me Down,* and had discussed revisiting the 1987 album as early as the following year. The new version, reworked by McNulty, is the highlight of 15-disc Bowie boxset *Loving The Alien (1983 - 1988)*. While fans may wince at the prospect of forking out another £220 for what has become an annual Bowie reissue mother lode, finally hearing an initially underwhelming album realised as its composer intended is an enticing prospect. In this issue's cover story, Gabrels, McNulty, Nile Rodgers, Hugh Padgham and Carlos Alomar join us in reflecting on the role they played in a decade that saw Bowie release his biggest-selling album and embrace disco, before ascending to, and then growing tired of, playing vast stadium shows.

It's difficult to fully appreciate the gamut of emotions Reeves Gabrels must have wrestled with

Elsewhere this issue, we meet Leeds psych-rockers Hookworms and find out how they've become one of the nation's most exciting live acts while holding down full-time day jobs; Mark Lanegan talks us through making his new album – *With Animals* – with Duke Garwood, and we hear from Tjinder Singh and Ben Ayres why the return of Cornershop into mid-Brexit Britain couldn't be more timely. Dennis Morris fills us in on photographing Bob Marley and John Lydon, and we meet Matt Sullivan, the driving force behind Light In The Attic, a label that's spread the word about talents as diverse as Françoise Hardy, Kris Kristofferson, The Sonics, Built To Spill and Haruomi Hosono. Our Classic Album is Primal Scream's 1991 dance-rock gem *Screamadelica*, and we round up 40 essential vinyl releases by Queen.

As this long, hot summer fades into autumn, we're looking forward to the first National Album Day, starting our list of the Top 100 LPs of the year and preparing for the 50th Mega Record & CD Fair in Utrecht. It's not a bad time to be a vinyl collector…

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

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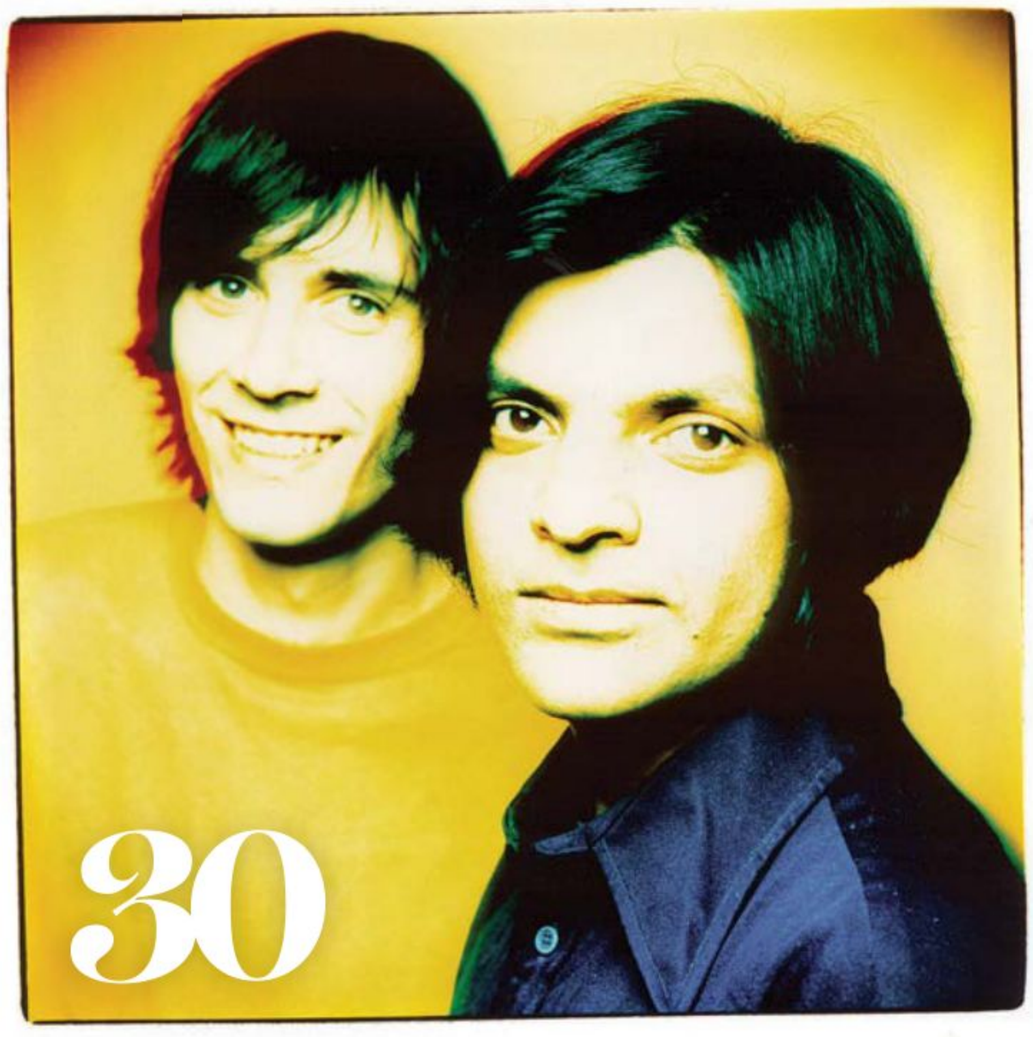

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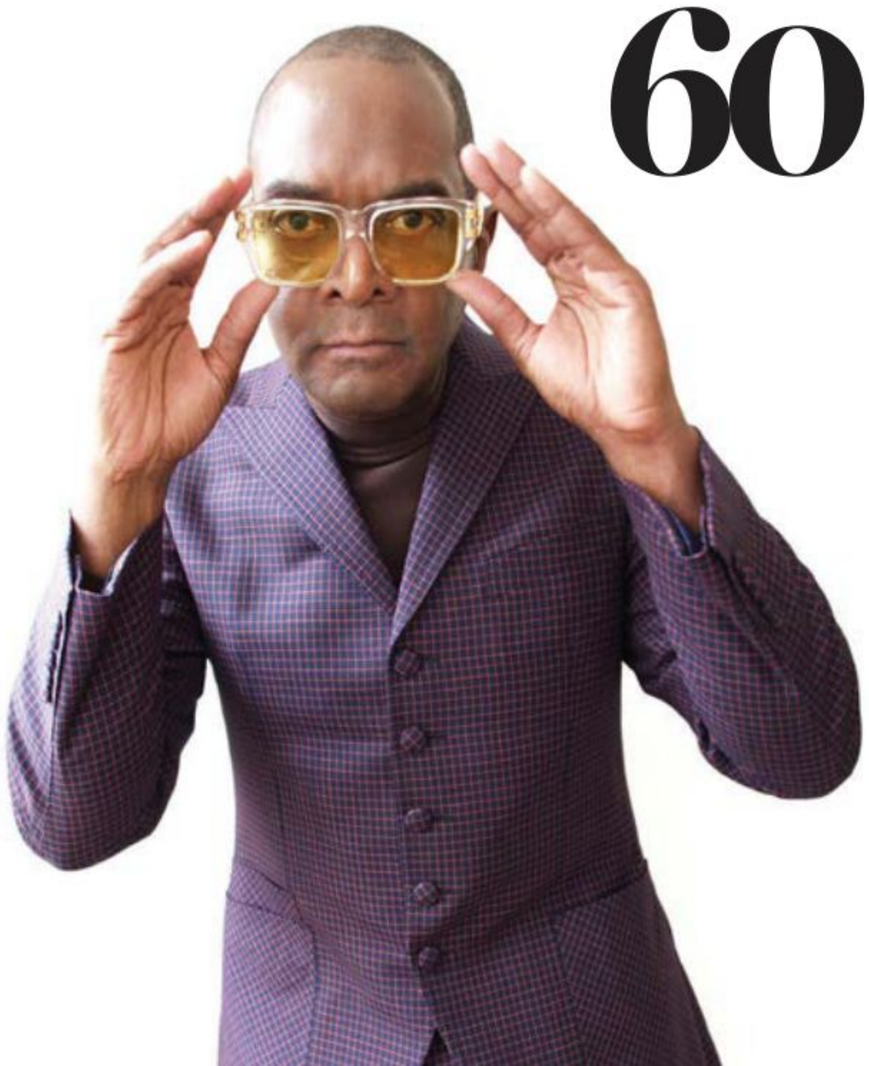

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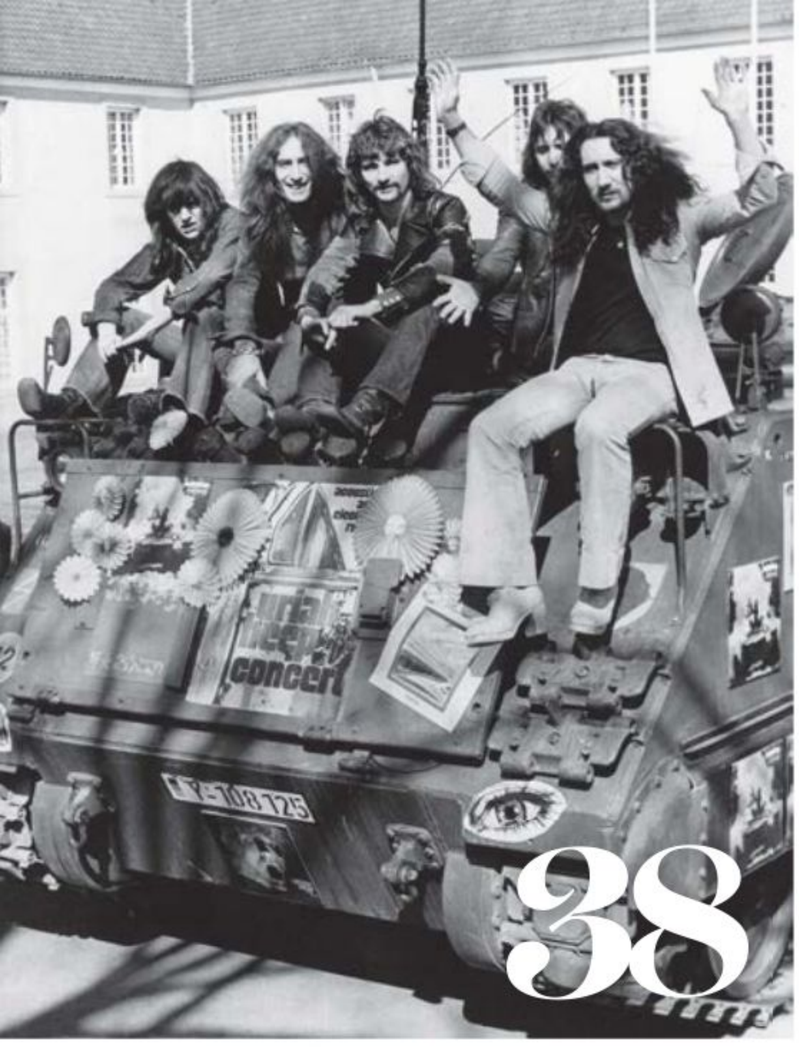

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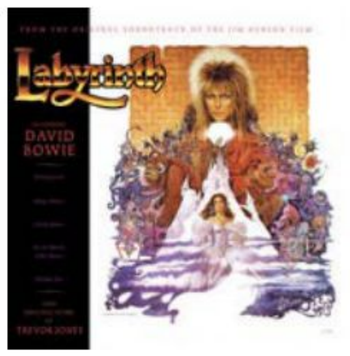
LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite 80s Bowie releases...

Gary Walker
China Girl

Owen Bailey
Ashes To Ashes



Jonny Highett
Labyrinth

Andy Cottle
Under Pressure

Ian Peel
This Is Not America

Meet our expert contributors...

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

John Earls
In addition to writing about music for *Classic Pop*, *NME* and *The Daily Star*, John Earls was editor of Teletext's Planet Sound for a decade. He writes about football, spends too much time on Twitter and is delighted that his new hometown in Bedfordshire has a decent record shop. There's even a bus that goes to Luton Town's ground, so his life is essentially sorted.

Gary Tipp
Gary has been collecting vinyl since time immemorial and still can't walk past a charity shop without going in on the off chance there's a mint treasure nestled somewhere in between the easy listening and the obligatory copy of Paul Young's *No Parlez*. He's also been writing words for magazines for longer than anyone can remember.

Jonathan Wright
Jonathan began writing about music in the late 80s. He's interviewed such singular talents as Shaun Ryder, Edwyn Collins and Richey Edwards. He's written for *The Guardian*, *Classic Pop* and many others. Jonathan edited *Adventure Rocketship! Let's All Go To The Science Fiction Disco*, a book of essays about the interface between geek culture and music.

Chris Parkin
After stapling together fanzines as a teenager, Chris won promotion to the world of proper music journalism and a job at *Time Out London* in the early 2000s. He's since written for the *Guardian*, *BBC*, *NME*, *RBMA*, *Glastonbury Free Press* and others. He continues to cherish the memory of Mick Hucknall and Ray Davies hanging up on him in a strop during an interview.

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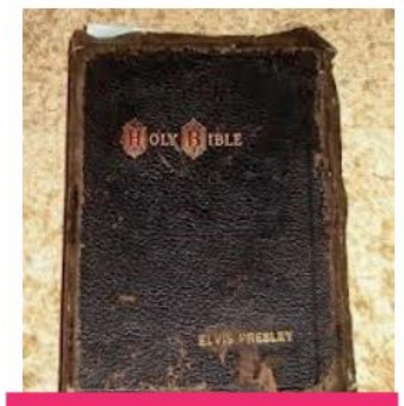

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On the record

CASH BACK

The Man In Black on blue, white and gold vinyl

The latest batch of releases in Charly Records' mammoth Johnny Cash reissue series, subject of our cover story in Issue 12, have landed in record shops.

The comprehensive remastering and repackaging upgrade of the Man In Black's legendary Sun catalogue continues with the release of Johnny Cash's first LP from 1957, *Johnny Cash With His Hot And Blue Guitar*, including one side of Cash's debut hit single, *Cry! Cry! Cry!*, the classic follow-up *Folsom Prison Blues* and the iconic *I Walk The Line*. The set is pressed on blue vinyl.

Released in November 1958, Johnny Cash's *Sings The Songs That Made Him Famous* features *Ballad Of A Teenage Queen, There You Go, Train Of Love, Don't Make Me Go, Next In Line, Home Of The Blues, The Ways Of A Woman In Love* and *Guess Things Happen That Way*. The 2018 edition comes on gold vinyl.

Complete with sleeve notes by Sun Records authority Adam Komorowski and president of Sun Entertainment Corporation John Singleton, the LP has been remastered from the original Sun master tapes by Nick Robbins at Soundmastering Studios, and cut to lacquers at half-speed by Barry Grint at Alchemy Mastering in London.

The third release in the set is *Greatest!*, including Cash classics *Get Rhythm, You Win Again* and *I Forgot To Remember To Forget*, on white vinyl.

WHO'S NEXT

LIMITED EDITION DOCTORS

Two new Doctor Who vinyl releases have been announced, with HMV exclusively stocking *Doctor Who: Cold Vengeance*, starring David Tennant and Billie Piper, on 5 October and Sainsbury's releasing *Doctor Who: Zygon Hunt*, featuring Tom Baker and Louise Jameson, on 19 October. Both releases will be numbered limited editions on coloured vinyl, and available only in the UK.

20

The number of 12" remixes on *Extended*, a new Ultravox compilation from 1981-2012 released on 16 November by Chrysalis and remastered by Alchemy.

GIRLS AND BOYS
Julien Baker, Phoebe Bridgers and Lucy Dacus, three of the brightest vocal talents around, have cut a self-titled EP as Boygenius. It's out on 9 November via Matador.

ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION
Nick Cave and Warren Ellis' soundtrack for 2005 film *The Proposition* gets a first vinyl release on 2 November via Mute/BMG on gold vinyl.

MORTAL TRIO

4AD reissues a trio of This Mortal Coil albums on 26 October. The new deluxe vinyl versions of *It'll End In Tears*, *Filigree & Shadow* and *Blood* feature remastered audio from the original analogue tapes by the late John Dent and artwork reimagined by 4AD founder Ivo Watts-Russell and Vaughan Oliver.

Belle and Sebastian

Scottish indie veterans announce line-up for Boaty Weekender cruise

Among the bands to play on Belle And Sebastian's four-day Boaty Weekender cruise from Barcelona to Sardinia are Mogwai, Camera Obscura, Django Django, Alvvays, Buzzcocks, Japanese Breakfast, Honeyblood, Hinds and Kelly Lee Owens. It takes place from 8-12 August 2019, with the pre-sale now open. *Long Live Vinyl* eagerly awaits an invitation…

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Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

Our columnist salutes his friend and label success story John Grant – whose new album, *Love Is Magic*, is out this month and is a further exploration of his multi-faceted creativity

John Grant has been in my life over 20 years now, and with his genius new record *Love Is Magic* coming out in the next few days, I thought it high time I dedicated a full page to his brilliance.

From inauspicious beginnings in 1998 when he sent me patchy demos of his first band The Czars, to now headlining at Brixton Academy in 2018, it has been a rollercoaster – and I say that with a smile on my face, because John truly is a rollercoaster junkie. And I don't just mean emotionally. His recent birthday bash was at the legendary Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio, the second-oldest amusement park in the USA – which, can you believe, opened in 1870? And it was here that John, with many great friends and family, enjoyed the 17 different rollercoaster rides over a beautiful long weekend. A fitting way to celebrate the great man's special day.

I've known about this hobby of John's since he first came to the UK and, on occasional days off from recording, he would head to Thorpe Park to unwind!

And unwind he did. Those early recording sessions with The Czars weren't a walk in the park. I flew them over to the Cocteaus' studio in Richmond in 1998 to begin the album *Before…But Longer* and it was clear that there was some work to be done. But so massive was John's talent, even though much of it was still dormant at that time, the glimpses he showed were significant enough for me to know this seedling would eventually blossom.

That it took until 2010 and the debut solo album, *Queen Of Denmark*, is less surprising once you know the background of what lay in the gaps between. The John Grant 'story' is a multi-layered and complex one, going back way further than the birth of The Czars and involving a lot more than music. However, it would be churlish in this column to try to précis the life and times of this fascinating man, and to skirt over the important issues of addiction and depression to ensure I adhere strictly to my word count is not something I would attempt – but what is clearly one of the greatest chapters of *my* own life, is the John Grant one.

Yes, because it involves so many incredible people who've played huge parts in the narrative, but mainly because it involves John Grant himself. What a warm, funny and culturally invested man he is. As you can probably guess from his songs, he is a huge film buff and a multi-linguist of the highest order. He's excellent company and a tremendous friend. People talk very kindly about my label being like "a family" and I'll take that any day, but John really *is* like family to me. There've been tears and there has been laughter, but always there is love. He's an absolute treasure of a human being.

People talk very kindly about my label being like "a family" and I'll take that any day, but John Grant really is like family to me

Fitting, then, that at the back end of 2018, we will release the new studio album, *Love Is Magic*. A title that might suggest a softening, with notes of optimism, maybe even that a more romantic album might be in the offing? You can think that if you like. Know this, however: John has never sounded this good. Reunited with co-producer Paul Alexander from Midlake, who he worked with so successfully on *Queen Of Denmark*, this is a John Grant who knows *exactly* what he wants to do, how it should sound and, more importantly, how to get there.

With recent Creep Show collaborator Benge and John himself co-producing, and with Craig Silvey's mix skills to the fore once more, I suggest this album is going to launch John into outer space. One of the album's songs has a title that will have some laughing, some shocked and some offended. In this antiseptic world of anodyne media and plastic celebrity, artists like John Grant, Ezra Furman, Baloji, Jambinai, Father John Misty and BC Camplight, who all hold a black mirror up to society's hypocrisies and inequalities, are needed more now than ever before.

Everything is backward. Those who are easily offended are, to my mind, often the most offensive. Those who are so easily horrified are most often the most horrifying. Those who are quickest to judge others are the ones that should be judged. With so much now at our fingertips, our minds should be expanding and growing, grasping more complex concepts and creating long-range solutions to the ills affecting our planet: but instead, they're shrinking and we are reverting to the past failed habits of bigotry and hate that cannot lead anywhere good.

Love Is Magic, like all great art, teaches us some important lessons. John Grant teaches me lessons every day. To always be curious, to read, to never stop learning, to listen, to care and be generous, and to create. And, even if it's only in your mind, to dance. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE *is currently in Lost Horizons and was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins. He founded the independent record label Bella Union*

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Discogs TRENDING CHART

The Top 10 trending vinyl releases from the Discogs community this month

10 ***Achtung Baby***
U2

9 ***Bandwagonesque***
Teenage Fanclub

8 ***Famous Monsters***
Misfits

7 ***Rainier Fog***
Alice In Chains

6 ***Songs From Northern Britain***
Teenage Fanclub

5 ***Daytona***
Pusha T

4 ***Grand Prix***
Teenage Fanclub

3 ***NTS***
Autechre

2 ***Zooropa***
U2

1 ***Be The Cowboy***
Mitski

Official Vinyl Albums Chart

AUGUST 2018

1 ***Joy As An Act Of Resistance***
Idles

2 ***Coup De Grace***
Miles Kane

3 ***Acts Of Fear And Love***
Slaves

4 ***Marauder***
Interpol

5 ***Rumours***
Fleetwood Mac

6 ***The Greatest Showman***
Motion Picture Cast Recording

7 ***Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again***
Motion Picture Cast Recording

8 ***Grand Prix***
Teenage Fanclub

9 ***Pet Sounds***
The Beach Boys

10 ***Staying At Tamara's***
George Ezra

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Work In Progress

My Name Is Safe In Your Mouth

Bella Union 9 November

My new album is... a panoramic piece of work – broad vistas represented by string quartets and timpani, contrasted with magnified glimpses of tiny intimate places, memories, thoughts and promises.

The sessions were... private, secret hours of tinkering in a studio that is a converted Victorian larder at the side of an old house. So, a very romantic but cold cupboard, basically!

I worked with... Toby Butler, who composed, programmed and arranged everything. Colin Elliott from Yellow Arch in Sheffield, who created some string arrangements and a sprinkling of piano magic

I was inspired by... the velvet-black night skies in Somerset, where there is so little light pollution that the stars and planets literally seek you out like a million torches in the face. I took inspiration from some unexpected and fascinating things that happened to my body on the journey to becoming a mother. I felt hugely supported by the NHS and discovered new strengths whilst undergoing several medical interventions and a stillborn. The reward did finally arrive safe and sound in the form of a little guy we called Sonny. He heard all these songs in utero, and I'm sure he recognises them now. When he hears them, his little face looks up curiously and like a puppet.

I used my... synth Gamelan plug-in. Great noises.

I learnt... the meaning of the word equanimity. During this transitional period of time, I guess I'll look back on it as a rite of passage into a new kind of self. Someone braver than before with more respect for my body and for all humans!

Touring the record... would be my pleasure in 2019. I want to get to know my songs in a physical, on-stage, grand way. I would so love to perform with the string quartet sometime.

You might be surprised to know that... my dad was the first person ever to export the Red London Routemaster bus to America. He started his own business doing this in the late 60s, selling them to airlines and airports. If you see one over there, he probably drove it around at some point…

REEL AROUND THE FOUNTAIN LIARS (Angus Andrew) has announced the follow-up to 2017's *TFCF* album, *Titles With The Word Fountain*, with a limited green vinyl edition due on 2 November.

THE VINYL REVIVAL

A new book written by Proper Distribution co-founder Graham Jones tells the story of how independent record shops were integral to saving vinyl. The sequel to *Last Shop Standing (Whatever Happened To Record Shops?)*, *The Vinyl Revival And The Shops That Made It Happen*, is out now from Proper Music Publishing. Look out for exclusive extracts coming soon in *Long Live Vinyl*.

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DAVID BOWIE

LOVING THE ALIEN
[1983 – 1988]

3 original albums remastered in 2018:

- **LET'S DANCE**
- **TONIGHT**
- **NEVER LET ME DOWN**

Exclusive to the set:

- **NEVER LET ME DOWN** *(2018)**
- **SERIOUS MOONLIGHT** *(LIVE '83)*+*
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#18 Goo

Sonic Youth

Released in June 1990, *Goo* was Sonic Youth's sixth studio album and their major-label debut. However, it nearly had an altogether different title. The band wanted to call the album *Blowjob?* inspired by a caricature of Joan Crawford by Arizona artist Raymond Pettibon, brother of Black Flag frontman and guitarist Greg Ginn. Kim Gordon had been an admirer of Pettibon's Indian ink style since seeing his work in early-80s fanzines while visiting her family in LA, but the band's record company Geffen were unsurprisingly not keen. Lee Ranaldo told *Pitchfork*: "We put it forth but we pretty much knew it was gonna get shot down just by the morals of a big-time record company like that." The alternative title, *Goo*, shared its name with a character in Pettibon's 1989 short film *Sir Drone*. His much-parodied, hand-drawn cover artwork is based on a newspaper photograph of Maureen Hindley and David Smith, key witnesses in the 1966 Moors Murders trial involving serial killers Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, with the stark black and white drawing accompanied by darkly mysterious comic-book style dialogue.

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Now Spinning

The 12 essential tracks on the *Long Live Vinyl* turntable while we were making this issue, plus our companion beer – alt-J's Absolutely No Worries, a Brut IPA brewed in collaboration with East London's Signature Brew.

1 ***Loving The Alien*** – David Bowie **(Parlophone)**
2 *Bassackwards* – **Kurt Vile** (Matador)
3 ***Song To The Siren*** – This Mortal Coil **(4AD)**
4 *Do The Trash Can* – **Jon Spencer** (In The Red)
5 ***Bunny's Dream*** – Matthew Dear **(Ghostly International)**
6 *Come On To Me* – **Paul McCartney** (Capitol Records)
7 ***Above Us*** – The KVB **(Invada)**
8 *San' Yago* – **Cave** (Drag City)
9 ***Shape Of A Heart*** – Ane Brun **(Balloon Ranger)**
10 *Money Money* – **Richard Ashcroft** (BMG Rights Management)
11 ***Dream*** – Hiroshi Yoshimura **(Empire Of Signs)**
12 *I Carry Water* – **Laura Gibson** (City Slang)

Mercury rising

Tracks from Queen's legendary Live Aid show will be released this month as part of the soundtrack album to *Bohemian Rhapsody*, a new film celebrating the band. Recorded at the historic Wembley concert in July 1985, these Live Aid songs (*Bohemian Rhapsody, Radio Ga Ga, Hammer To Fall, We Are The Champions*) sit alongside other rare live tracks and new versions of old favourites.

The tracklisting was announced on 5 September, which would have been Freddie's 72nd birthday. The 22 songs on the soundtrack were produced by Brian May and Roger Taylor.

Bohemian Rhapsody is scheduled to have its World Premiere in the UK on 23 October. It stars *Mr Robot*'s Rami Malek as Freddie, Gwilym Lee as Brian May, Ben Hardy as Roger Taylor and Joe Mazzello as John Deacon.

COMPETITION

Win! Collector's edition 12" Tom Bailey lathe cuts

Long Live Vinyl **has got two 12" lathe-cut copies of singles from former Thompson Twins vocalist Tom Bailey's new album *Science Fiction* to give away. These limited-edition 12"s are cut in real-time using a lathe with a diamond stylus. All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning a copy is go to www.longlivevinyl.net/baileycomp and correctly answer the simple question.**

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PledgeMusic is a direct-to-fan music site that provides unique experiences such as exclusive editions, backstage passes, signed guitars and handwritten lyrics. They launch more than 1,000 new projects a month. Here's our pick of what's coming up on Pledge. For more details, go to www.pledgemusic.com

ROXETTE
LOOK SHARP!
5 October
Originally released in October 1988, *Look Sharp!* was Swedish pop duo Roxette's breakthrough album containing the hit singles *The Look* and *Listen To Your Heart*. This 30th anniversary edition comes on red and standard black vinyl with a deluxe boxset including a CD of demos. A DVD is also available.

JOHN HIATT
THE ECLIPSE SESSIONS
12 October
Veteran troubadour John Hiatt returns with a new album recorded over a four-day period in 2017 that included the August solar eclipse. Signed vinyl is available, with other exclusive extras including John Hiatt keychain, signed lithograph and exclusive John Hiatt baseball hat.

RICK WAKEMAN
PIANO ODYSSEY
12 October
Rick Wakeman's follow-up to last year's Top 10 *Piano Portraits* album on signed vinyl with a DVD bundle of live *Portraits* concert.

RAZORLIGHT
OLYMPUS SLEEPING
26 October
A first new album for 10 years from Johnny Borrell's boys, with extras including signed gatefold vinyl and an exclusive Razorlight art print. UK tour dates in December.

MASTODON
REMISSION
26 October
Debut album from 2002, remastered on coloured vinyl with new cover art and previously unreleased artwork from album artist Paul Romano.

IN THE PIPELINE...

OMD Live w/ the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Date TBC

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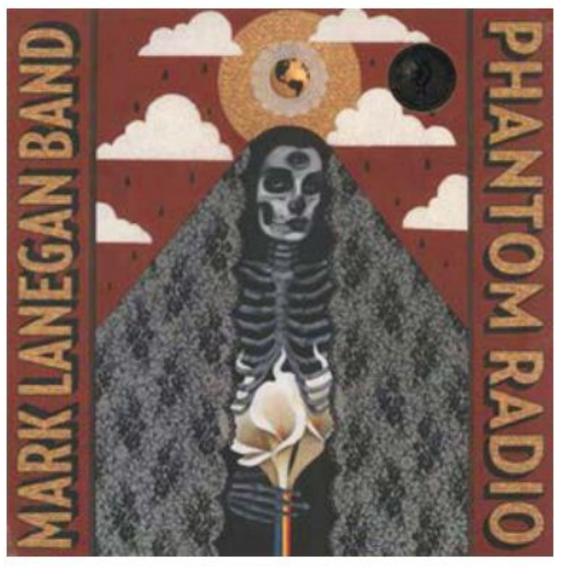

MARK LANEGAN BAND
PHANTOM RADIO

Sealed 2014 UK 10-track white vinyl LP. Although composed partially on a phone app called FunkBox, his ninth solo album delivers some haunting ballads. Gatefold picture sleeve, limited to 1,000 copies. HVNLP106. Still in the stickered shrink wrap, it should fetch around £30.

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DAVID BOWIE
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Working on a recent vinyl reissue project, I realised that one of its biggest challenges didn't exist back in the day – and it's a complication that's very specific to this era of the vinyl revival…

There were many challenges with a reissue project that I recently worked on: a deluxe 2CD reboot of Art Of Noise's third album, *In No Sense? Nonsense!*. Originally released in 1987, it met with mixed reviews, but has matured with time and by the 2010s, AllMusic had it down as "about as rich and complex as they ever got".

Would the group members approve? Was there any unreleased material? If so, where were the tapes, and what state were they in? All these issues were overcome, and a 2CD set was duly compiled. I added 7" mixes after the main album on Disc One, and Disc Two was split in half: demos and outtakes first, then a collection of 12" mixes.

But then came the vinyl-specific problem I mentioned earlier. When everything has been created with the 2CD format in mind, what happens when you come to arrange the accompanying vinyl version? Or, to quote the email from Music On Vinyl, who are releasing it: "Ian, please send us the side splits ASAP!"

As you might imagine, two CDs at 70-something minutes per disc doesn't transpose very quickly or neatly to four sides of vinyl at 22 minutes each.

And that's the 'very 2018' challenge. In 1987, when this album was on Our Price's racks, the vinyl edition came first. If it had to be rethought, then it was for the CD edition, not the other way around. In fact, when the group's first album was released in 1984, it only came out on LP and cassette. By the time the CD revolution kicked in a few years later, the band's label didn't just re-release the vinyl LP on CD; instead, they took the group's first three vinyl releases and compiled them into a special CD-only release, to properly explore and exploit this brand new, 70-something minute format. But now, 30 years later, everything's turned on its head!

So, about those side splits and solving that puzzle… It came in a flash of inspiration. Rather than the almost open-ended sprawl of CD, 22 minutes per side forced some very tough decisions on tracks, and only the crème de la crème remained.

Two CDs at 70-something minutes per disc doesn't transpose very neatly to four sides of vinyl at 22 minutes each. And that's the 'very 2018' challenge

Plus, during the mastering phase of the CD project, I spotted a great theme buried in the bonus tracks: a set of live studio jams with a full band, from the early songwriting stages of the album. I rejigged the sequence and gathered those together to form an almost gig-style set on Side Three of the vinyl, which now gets its own title, The No-Nonsense Studio Jams.

And that's the beauty of this puzzle. Whereas CD gave me the ability to spread bonus tracks out with variety 'in cinemascope', rethinking the tracklist for vinyl forced me to be much more concise, and to find and present not every story behind the album – just the most interesting and the most compelling. ●

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On The Radar

LAURA GIBSON

Singer-songwriter finds beauty in the void on stunning fifth album

"If we're already goners, why wait any longer for something to crack open". The first words Laura Gibson wrote for her fifth LP (sixth, if you include 2009's *Bridge Carols* with Ethan Rose) offer a glimpse into a work that confronts grief and loss head-on. The Portland, Oregon multi-instrumentalist and folk singer-songwriter lost her father at the age of 14 and *Goners* finds her probing the link between birth and death across 10 dream-like compositions that flicker with enchanting beauty.

Those first searching words were committed to paper in 2016 during an intensive writing session in Florida, as the bucolic touch of nature entwined with Gibson's ruminations. "I was given an artist residency at Everglades National Park, which was so wonderful but it was such a sorrowful time in the world and the country, and at first it was like, 'why even write a record?'. I was so thankful to be in nature. I'd go out every day and was learning all sorts of things about plants and animals. I came away with a lot of melody ideas and two notebooks full of things I'd written about life, grief, despair and finding hope, and those things ended up being the record."

Another line, on the unflinchingly direct closing track *I Don't Want Your Voice To Move Me*, hints at resignation. "Honey, all I know of hope is throwing stones into the void," sings Gibson in hushed tones over a slowly unfurling work of real beauty. "I think, in some ways, everything I've written has to do with grief," she says. "Any song that's a love song has grief woven into it – they're two sides of the same coin.

"I can't separate this record from the time I wrote it in. I was overcome with sorrow so much of the time and anger at the way such greed is being displayed – in many places, but especially in America. That line reflected both a helplessness, and also I think that often, writing songs is throwing stones into the void.

"*Empire Builder* [2016 album], I wrote during such a hard time in my life personally and this record is more of a hard time in the world and in my friends' lives. I think it's darker and stranger, and when I began writing, the world felt so destabilised – the art that moved me most was often things that were surreal or magical, and I started to get into writing songs that felt like dreams.

"I used a lot of fable imagery and wanted to push into surreal territory, to paint a scene where transformations are happening. I was reading a lot about shapeshifters, and that felt like a different way of approaching songwriting."

As well as playing many of the piano and keyboard parts on the album, Gibson co-produced *Goners* with friend and engineer John Askew, her soothing tremulous voice complemented by the nuanced playing of guitarist Dave Depper, drummer Dan Hunt and stand-up bassist Nate Query.

"John is wonderful to work with. I worked with him on *Empire Builder* as well," she says. "When I'm making a record, I care a lot about growing and education. I want to come away a better producer. John is a great mix of supporting me having a vision, but also having great ideas and trying new things. It's a really nice balance." ***Gary Walker***

Laura Gibson's Goners is out on 26 October. She plays London's Queen Elizabeth Hall with Dan Mangan on 13 November.

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The Art *of* The Album

STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

THE BYRDS

Columbia Studios, Los Angeles, September 1965

Minus drummer Michael Clarke, The Byrds (l-r Roger McGuinn, David Crosby, Gene Clark and Chris Hillman) are captured on a break in-between recording harmonies for their second album, *Turn! Turn! Turn!* Keen to capitalise on the runaway success of their jingle-jangly debut *Mr. Tambourine Man*, they entered Columbia Studios in LA to record the follow-up. The sessions weren't without their tensions, with David Crosby, in particular, upset at Roger McGuinn's closeness to producer Terry Melcher (Doris Day's son), and the pairing's reticence to include his songs on the album. Similar resentments rose over the number of principal songwriter Gene Clark's compositions that were included, with Clark quitting the band a year later. Despite the inter-band squabbling, the album was released to great critical success, with the title track a big hit on both sides of the Atlantic.

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WHY I LOVE...
Tubular Bells
Mike Oldfield

MATT BERRY

The *IT Crowd* star and National Album Day ambassador's love of prog was kickstarted by Mike Oldfield's debut, a landmark album that, as he tells **Steve Harnell**, he remains in thrall to 30 years on

"I first heard *Tubular Bells* on vinyl as a 14-year-old. I couldn't afford CDs as a kid, I didn't have any money, so everything was on vinyl for me up until the early 90s. My mum bought it for me after I told her it looked like something I'd be interested in.

"I first heard an excerpt of it on a compilation that was around in the mid 80s and that was all I needed. I was immediately obsessed and I've been playing it constantly ever since. It was my first introduction to prog, although at 14 I wouldn't have really known what prog was at that point.

"Mike Oldfield was 17 when he made it, so I was impressed by the fact when I first heard it that it was someone only a few years older than me who created that record. It spurred me on to make my own things, whether it would be TV, art or albums.

"Aged 13, just before the first time I heard *Tubular Bells*, my parents bought me an organ, which they left in my bedroom. The cool thing was they didn't hassle me to get any lessons, they just left it in my bedroom for me to discover. From that, I got a very early and cheap four-track, then I started to record the organ, four different tracks, building it up. I couldn't play anyone else's songs because I couldn't read music – I still can't.

A STRONG FORCE

"Even all these years later there still aren't that many albums like *Tubular Bells,* where one musician has played every one of the acoustic instruments live, hasn't used a computer – basically played against themselves. You've got to remember that it was 1973, you couldn't cut and paste and repeat musical phrases like you can now. For a phrase that lasts three minutes, he would have had to have played for three minutes. Not many people are doing that now, or did it since.

"I'd never heard anything like it before, and when you find out about Mike Oldfield's state of mind when he made it, it makes perfect sense. There's an atmosphere of total chaos that runs through the whole thing, whether it's contained or set free. There's a kind of mental illness you can hear through it. In terms of listening, that makes it rich, you can return to it multiple times and still find something new.

"When music has been thought about so obsessively by the composer, you're going to experience a richness in it, as opposed to someone doing it as a cynical exercise for the money. That will probably just last two or three listens, you'll get out of that exactly the same amount as whoever did it put into it.

"There's this assumption that if you are incredibly talented within the arts then you'll obviously be a dancing whatever, but with Mike that didn't necessarily follow. There's no reason why he should be an extrovert, a frontman, just because he's made a best-selling album. That was the fight he had. I understand it from a record-label point of view and I understand it from his point of view. Neither he or Richard Branson would have ever dreamed that *Tubular Bells* would have been a best-seller. So thoughts of him playing live and doing interviews would have been far from their minds. When they were faced with it, I'm sure it was a shock to both of them.

"I didn't care whether *Tubular Bells* was fashionable or not – the strength of the music was a lot more important. It's a much stronger force for me than following fashion or being part of anything, or fitting in. I'm also very fond of *Hergest Ridge* and *Ommadawn,* which he did afterwards. The first three of his albums are the ones for me." ●

Matt Berry is an ambassador for National Album Day, which takes place on 13 October. His new album Television Themes is released on 5 October via Acid Jazz.

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THERE'S AN ATMOSPHERE OF TOTAL CHAOS THAT RUNS THROUGH THE WHOLE THING. THERE'S A KIND OF MENTAL ILLNESS YOU CAN HEAR...

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The dark knight rises

Despite possessing an awe-inspiring back catalogue, Seattle survivor Mark Lanegan remains an enigma. Following the release of *With Animals*, his second full-length album with British multi-instrumentalist Duke Garwood, the singer tells **Dan Biggane** how music was his saviour...

With his brooding, bluesy baritone and delicious dark tales of romance, regret and redemption, Mark Lanegan has cultivated the most impressive collection of soulful bourbon-soaked songs and beautifully bruised ballads. His instantly recognisable velvety vocals have drawn the attention of a wide range of artists across the musical landscape and it would appear that this particular lone wolf is more than content to surround himself with a tight-knit pack of like-minded collaborators, the latest being British mood-maker Duke Garwood.

"I first met Duke at the Bush Hall in London when he was performing in Steve Gullick's band and I was with Soulsavers," opens Lanegan, his deep voice contemplative and focused. "I already had a copy of his record, *Emerald Palace*, and was a fan. That was some 10 years ago now, but we agreed that night to work together and the result was *Black Pudding* [2013]. That album developed over a number of years, with Duke sending me music to write words for. Eventually he came over to California and we went into the studio.

"For *With Animals*, Duke was watching my house and taking care of my animals while I was away for a couple of weeks. He borrowed an eight-track cassette recorder and when I returned he had all this beautiful music. I found it really inspiring and wrote the words in two or three days. We hadn't even talked about making another record and it is probably the most spontaneous album I've ever been a part of."

More electronic than its predecessor, *With Animals* is cut from the same musical cloth as Lanegan's more recent solo releases *Blues Funeral* (2012), *Phantom Radio* (2014) and last year's *Gargoyle*.

"I think that comes from the fact that he was writing all this music on the Moog synthesiser that is in my dining room," says Lanegan. "The music always dictates and points me in the direction of what I sing. I write the lyrics according to what feels instinctively correct. I never try to force words on to a piece of music. Of course, I try to form them into a way that has meaning for me, but I never specifically try to write a song about a certain subject. It's a very natural process."

The recently published book of Lanegan's lyrics, entitled *I Am The Wolf*, highlights

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MAKING HIS MARK

Lanegan's highly developed spirit of collaboration

THE GUTTER TWINS

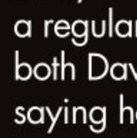
Afghan Whigs main man Greg Dulli and Lanegan have regularly contributed to each other's projects, most notably Dulli's The Twilight Singers. The two came together as The Gutter Twins to release *Saturnalia* in 2008.

"Greg is like a brother. Our musical association grows out of our close friendship. We make music together because we're friends – we're not friends because we make music. When we meet it's to have lunch, go to the movies or a basketball game, not to write songs. The Gutter Twins came about because we were forever being asked if we'd make a full album together and we thought we'd better do it to stop all the questioning. It took us an absolute age, but one Christmas neither of us had any family or girlfriends around, so we went into the studio. We came out with a couple of songs. The following Christmas we recorded a couple more. Eventually, we just decided to focus and get the album finished."

ISOBEL CAMPBELL

Lanegan has recorded three albums with the former Belle And Sebastian singer, including the Mercury Music Prize-nominated *Ballad Of The Broken Seas* (2006).

"I was a fan of both Belle And Sebastian and Isobel's first solo record. One day Beggars Banquet, the label I was with at the time, said she was trying to get hold of me to sing on the track *Why Does My Head Hurt So?* for her EP. She sent me this piece of music that had a little bit of her singing and the rest of the tape was empty, so I finished it off not realising she already had a part written. Luckily, when I sang what I had done down the phone, she loved it. We met in Glasgow, hit it off, and discussed working on an album. Then I received all these amazing songs she had written specifically for me – it was such an amazing gift. She had set the table and all I had to do was sit at it… my role was just to support her vision. I love her to death and I'm very proud of the records we made."



SOULSAVERS/ DAVE GAHAN

Electronica duo Rich Machin and Ian Glover have released six albums as Soulsavers including two with Lanegan (*It's Not How Far You Fall, It's The Way You Land* in 2007 and *Broken* in 2009). The more recent *The Light The Dead See* (2012) and *Angels & Ghosts* (2015), were fronted by Depeche Mode's Dave Gahan. Lanegan and Gahan teamed up with Martyn LeNoble and Christian Eigner for a cover of David Bowie's *Cat People (Putting Out Fire)* in 2016.

"Rich is one of my best friends and we're always talking about doing something new. Dave is singing with them now and I would love to work with him again. I'm a huge fan of everything Dave does. Martyn, who is a regular in my band and works with both Dave and Soulsavers, was just saying how it would be great to have Dave sing on my next album. When you have a great artist like that you don't want them to just come in and play a supporting part. I'm sure if I asked him to sing backing he'd do it in a second, but to me that's a waste of his talent."

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Lanegan has contributed to all but two QOTSA records (the eponymous debut and last year's *Villains*). Perhaps his most notable involvement with Josh Homme's rock behemoth is 2002's *Songs For The Deaf*, where he's credited as co-writer on *No One Knows* and providing lead vocals on the epic *A Song For The Dead*.

"I would do anything for Josh. He sang on the track *Emperor* for my last record. I was a fan of the Kyuss records and when they disbanded we approached him to play additional guitar for Screaming Trees when we toured *Dust*. It was obvious he had more talent in his little finger than the rest of us had in our entire collective being… but he was gracious enough to play rhythm from 1996 right up until our last show in 2000. He actually asked me to be the singer for Queens Of The Stone Age before they made their first record, but I said: 'Dude, you just need to sing the songs yourself,' which of course was a smart move for him because he's such a brilliant singer."

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"IT WAS A BIG HONOUR THAT GREG GINN WANTED US TO MAKE A RECORD FOR SST"

just how poetic and hauntingly heartfelt his writing is: "His words carry the weight of cities, nights and oceans," says Henry Rollins and, in the book's foreword, Moby observes "just how quick and willing Lanegan is to throw himself under the bus".

Mark said: "When I sat down to transcribe the lyrics for the book I had to listen to records that I hadn't heard in years. I was emotionally affected by a few of them and that was a surprise to me because, while I get emotionally affected by other people's music, it doesn't usually happen from music I write myself. There were a couple of songs, such as *Strange Religion* and *Morning Glory Wine* from *Bubblegum* [2004], that have deep memories attached and a certain amount of sadness for me."

EVEN IN HIS YOUTH

Born and raised in Ellensburg, Washington, music was Lanegan's saviour as a youngster. In *I Am The Wolf,* he writes: "Like most things in life, I fell into it by accident and at first the only motivation for being creative was an intense, restless dissatisfaction in the way I felt and an attempt to change it."

Early occupations included gas station attendant, dish washer and restroom cleaner – he even tried to join the circus. His musical career started in high school, when a mutual love for punk, garage and classic rock saw the troubled teenager team up with the Conner brothers Gary Lee (guitar) and Van (bass) to form Screaming Trees alongside original drummer Mark Pickerel.

"The first album I bought with my own money was *Tommy*, but it was the movie soundtrack, not The Who's 1969 release," Lanegan chuckles dryly. "The next was by Alice Cooper and, like every other kid, I listened to classic rock bands such as Led Zeppelin and the Stones. When I first heard Hendrix it blew my mind, however it wasn't the guitar playing that I was drawn to, but his vocals.

"Another early favourite as a kid was Kraftwerk. My father once found a box of used albums at his workplace and gave them to me. One was *Autobahn,* and it was the first

Steve Gullick

electronic music I'd ever heard. I thought it was thrilling.

"However, it wasn't until I heard the Sex Pistols and The Damned in my early teens that I *really* became excited about music and it became the focus of my life. I immediately began to research bands like The Stooges, New York Dolls, The Velvet Underground and Ramones, it was all I did for a couple of years. I'd take the bus 120 miles to Seattle and walk around record stores before heading back to my small town.

"I listened to everything from Echo & The Bunnymen to Judas Priest. I loved 13th Floor Elevators' *Easter Everywhere*, Joy Division's *Closer*, the first three Gun Club records – *Fire Of Love*, *Miami* and *The Las Vegas Story*… They were like a bible to me.

"When Screaming Trees first started, we would play a set of Black Flag and Stooges covers. We were big Black Flag fans and it was such an honour that Greg Ginn wanted us to make a record for SST. We couldn't believe that we were on the same label as Black Flag, Minutemen and Sonic Youth."

SUBTERRANEAN POP CITY

Criminally overlooked, Screaming Trees would go on to release three psychedelic-flavoured hard-rock albums on SST, *Even If And Especially When* (1987), *Invisible Lantern* (1988) and *Buzz Factory* (1989), before signing to Epic Records. Co-produced by Chris Cornell and released in January 1991, the band's major-label debut *Uncle Anesthesia* hardly set the music world on fire… that honour/curse would be bestowed on a small underground trio from neighbouring Aberdeen. Nirvana didn't just light the touch paper with *Nevermind*, they positively blazed a trail for all the flannel-shirt wearing alt-rock acts that emerged from the 90s counter-culture. Seattle was in the spotlight and the music landscape changed forever.

"For me, it was strange watching from the periphery as it happened to my friends," admits Lanegan. "Kurt Cobain was a very close friend. I always thought he was a genius and I knew he was destined for greatness, but no one could've predicted just how huge Nirvana would become and how they'd change music. Layne Staley was also one of my best friends and his band, Alice In Chains, had huge success too. Suddenly the focus was on our town and all the local acts were topping the Billboard Charts... but that didn't happen to my band. We only had one minor hit and I'm really glad about that because I'm still making music today. Sadly, a lot of my friends are either not around anymore, or don't make records.

"We made our first major-label album with Chris just as Alice In Chains achieved success. They were the first, but then Nirvana and Pearl Jam soon followed, so Epic Records decided to keep us around.

"At that point, we had made a collective decision to change the way we worked as a band. Up until then, my role in the band was to simply sing the songs written by our guitar player, but for *Sweet Oblivion* [1992] and *Dust* [1996], we agreed that we had to share creative input. *Sweet Oblivion* was the first album that

The former Screaming Trees frontman possesses a fierce work ethic that would leave many of us for dead

Steve Gullick

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Steve Gullick

I found personally satisfying but, by the time *Dust* was released, we were already in our death robes."

HARDCORE TROUBADOUR

As Screaming Trees soldiered on, Lanegan had already been busy developing his own songwriting skills on a number of critically acclaimed solo albums. *The Winding Sheet* (1990), *Whiskey For The Holy Ghost* (1994) and *Scraps At Midnight* (1998) reflected an earthy richness and more understated Americana-blues.

"Around the time Sub Pop offered me the opportunity to make my first solo album, a guy I was working with had just introduced me to the likes of Leonard Cohen, Tim Buckley, Tim Hardin, Nick Drake and Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*. It seems crazy to me now, but I made a lot of records with the Screaming Trees without ever hearing any of that stuff. I picked up an acoustic guitar and basically set about writing songs.

"Those early records sound the way they do because I wasn't savvy or proficient enough to record any other way, nor was I articulate enough to impart a bigger vision to anyone else. I wanted *Field Songs* [2001] to be completely electronic, but I had burnt through my entire budget making my first covers album *I'll Take Care Of You* [1999]. When I set about recording *Bubblegum*, I was in a position to add all those noisy synths and drum machines. On 2012's *Blues Funeral*, I wanted to make something that had all those elements but with more melody. That's what I've done ever since."

Alongside his solo releases, Lanegan is constantly lending his voice to other acts. Queens Of The Stone Age, Soulsavers, Isobel Campbell and fellow Gutter Twin Greg Dulli are all artists who have utilised Lanegan's incredible talents to notable effect. The singer has also contributed to releases by Melissa Auf der Maur, Martina Topley-Bird, Creature With The Atom Brain, Earth, Moby, Unkle… the list goes on.

"I've been really blessed to have had the chance to make music with artists I love, and I'm lucky to have shared stages with all-time heroes such as John Cale, Peter Hook and Nick Cave. There's a lot of people out there I'd like to work with in the future, but I'd love to collaborate with Brian Eno. *Taking Tiger Mountain…*, *Another Green World*, *Before And After Science*, *…Music For Airports* are works of genius. Roxy Music were such an influence… *Country Life* is one of my top 10 records of all time – and I don't think that Eno even played on that one!

"But I would have to say that the most important musical collaboration for me has been with Alain Johannes, who I originally met on *The Desert Sessions* and then played with in Queens around the time of *Lullabies To Paralyze* [2005]. He has been my partner in making records ever since *Bubblegum*.

"We've just finished my next record, a 57-minute double album, which will come out some time next year. I've always wanted to do a double, but getting the sequencing is crucial. It is so important that the mood flows from start to finish. I usually start with a song that feels like a natural opener, then I look for a song to end the record... then I look for all the stuff that goes in between.

"It's what I'll just keep on doing: make new music and tour… God willing." ●

"I'VE BEEN BLESSED TO HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO MAKE MUSIC WITH ARTISTS THAT I LOVE"

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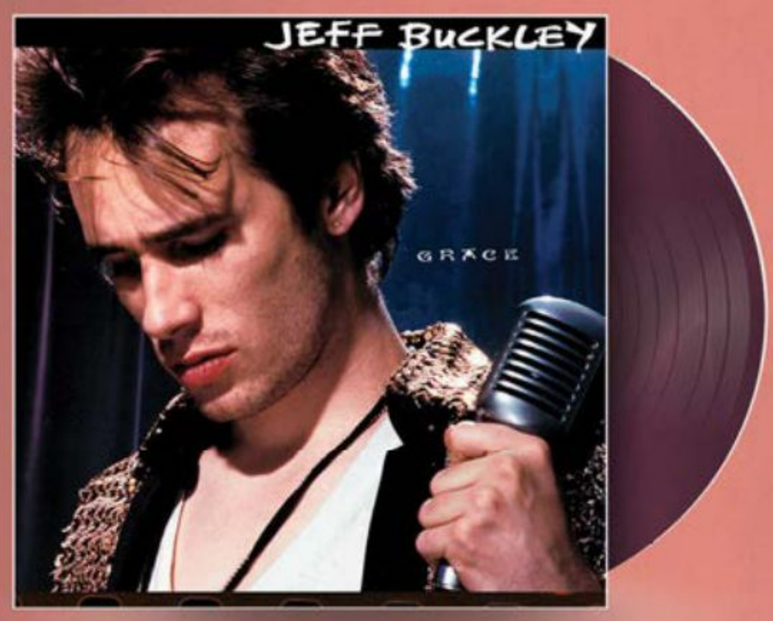

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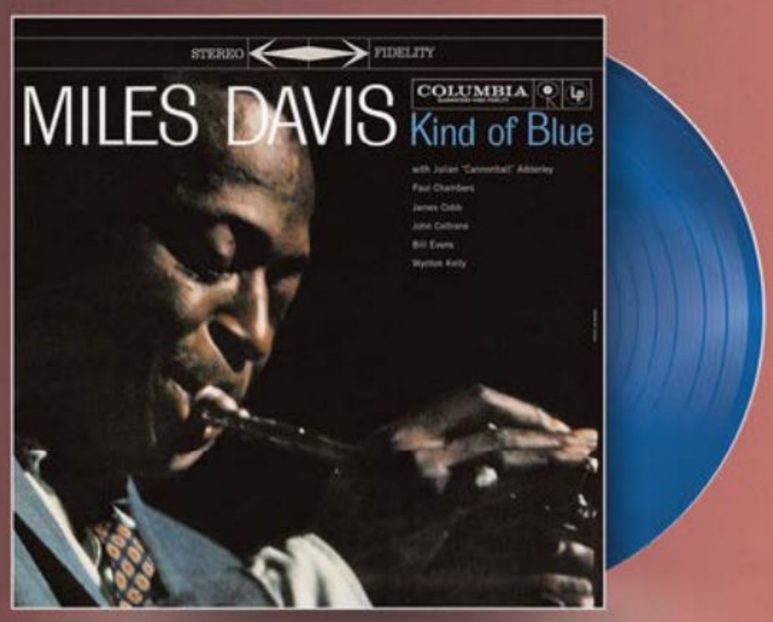

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UNEASY TIMES

Cornershop returned this summer with a new single. Tjinder Singh and Ben Ayres meet **Jonathan Wright** to look back on the band's early years and ahead to a much-delayed new album in 2019

In every musical career that extends beyond a couple of records, there are times when it seems appropriate for a band to return. And maybe the summer of 2018, with its heat-haze shimmer overlaying a country uneasy with itself in the wake of the Brexit vote, represented just such a moment for Cornershop.

This, after all, is a band that first came to attention in the early 1990s during the dog days of the John Major administration, when Cornershop were one of few all-male bands allied to the radicalism of the Riot Grrrl movement. And it's really not so far from feminist punk, arguments over Maastricht and Morrissey saying questionable things to #MeToo, Brexit and, well, Morrissey saying questionable things.

"I think politically we were writing about the politics of now then," says frontman Tjinder Singh, Cornershop's core member along with Ben Ayres.

That said, and for all that politics is so often to the fore in Singh's conversation in particular, the standalone single *Double Denim* ("You and me/ It's all right/ Double-denim nights") was a gentle, blissed-out tune. On its flip was a cover of The Archies' *Sugar, Sugar* – a "genius piece of bubblegum pop," says Ayres. The accompanying video references *Peanuts* and Hanna-Barbera cartoons. It's a single that comes across as a paean to the healing effects of music.

But there's a kicker to Cornershop's undoubted knack for turning out catchy singles, the danger of misinterpretation: "People say, 'Oh it's so upbeat,' even when it's something like *Sleep On The Left Side*, which is actually about death. 'It's so upbeat'. 'Oh good'.

In truth, these kind of misinterpretations may just be key to understanding the band, in that Cornershop have been maddeningly and wonderfully difficult to pin down, both lyrically and musically, in a restless career that's seen them move beyond their lo-fi indie roots to make music that deftly encompasses Punjabi pop, hip-hop, art rock, soul, jazz and some other genres we've probably overlooked.

"I went to see a group last night and they're doing exactly the same things as they did in the 90s," says Singh. "You just think, 'Oh, what's the point in doing that?'. We don't even do exactly what we did with one song, so in a way that's given us longevity, but it's also made it hard for our stuff to stick."

This may be about to change. All being well, a new album will land some time in the first half of next year, made up of tracks already partly completed. Although the Cornershop name has, over the past few years, graced a collaboration with female singer Bubbley Kaur, *Cornershop And The Double 'O' Groove Of*, a singles-club compilation, *Urban Turban*, and even an easy-listening remake of their debut with *Hold On It's Easy*, it will be, for want of a better description, the first new Cornershop band album since *Judy Sucks A Lemon For Breakfast* in 2009. It's a long enough gap to make you think its release may be accompanied by a reassessment of Cornershop's back catalogue, a search for those themes that run consistently through the band's disparate releases.

THE SIMPLE BUTTON

For one thing, this means politics. In particular, both Singh and Ayres are exercised by Brexit, which Singh sees in part as representing something menacing that "was there before" in British society, and also found expression in the Windrush scandal driven by the Home Office's hostile environment. "I don't give a fuck about football coming home, but a lot of other things are coming home before it, and the problem is there," says Singh. "We were talking about Enoch Powell in our first EPs, and now it's come and Enoch Powell is still there. We were running one way and time has caught up with us."

Here, it helps to understand that Singh was raised in Wolverhampton, where Powell, who became infamous for his 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968, was for a long time a local Conservative MP. "He was a very clever chap for the buttons that he pressed,

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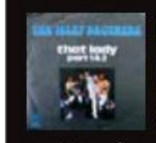
Roger Sargent

UPBEAT, TOP-RANKING RECORDS

Cornershop's Tjinder Singh and Ben Ayres select their favourite feelgood sounds



ISLEY BROTHERS *THAT LADY, PARTS 1 & 2*

BA "The *3+3* LP that *Summer Breeze* and *That Lady* were on was a big favourite of ours. I remember picking up an album copy on tour somewhere and it just never stopped being played. We used to travel on tour with portable plastic record players, which sounds a great idea, but you could really only use them when the bus stopped moving. We used to listen to that album all the time, a near-perfect record."

JONATHAN RICHMAN AND THE MODERN LOVERS

THAT SUMMER FEELING

BA "It's a really great song, it just sums up the whole feeling of summer for me. The single has a great cover, kind of like a painting of a garage in the hot sun or something. His songs had that summer element as well."

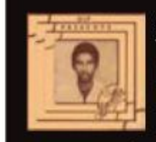
TS "Long hot nights, when anything could bloody happen."

A.S. KANG *GIDHIAN DI RANIYE NE GIDHE WICH AA*

TS "It's very raw, there's only about three instruments on it and it's very good. They used to do so much with a harmonium and a drum and a male vocalist, and possibly a female vocalist for wedding receptions before bhangra came. Bhangra did the same thing, but with PA systems behind it, trying to get it into the charts."

BA "And changed the whole dynamic of the sound."

TS "Yeah, and made it more westernised. It's very raw and we would have all grown up with this as well – summer cassettes."



SAM CARTY *LIFE IS A FLOWER*

BA "A Lee Perry production. I first came across it on a Lee Perry compilation. It's a weird one. It's not one that seems that well circulated on compilations and stuff. It's a beautiful track, he's singing falsetto from the mid-late 70s."

SISTER NANCY *ONE, TWO*

TS "It's very raw. There are a few females like Sister Nancy that come up in many genres. In Punjabi folk, it would be something like Ranjit Kaur, a particular voice that just stands out. In hip-hop, it would be someone like Roxette Shante and in reggae, it's her, 'cause everything else is more lovers rock and it's not as good, whereas she was distinctive, which is why she still gets sampled. **BA** "She sounds like a female Yellowman. Or he sounds like a male Sister Nancy."

"I THINK MUSIC ITSELF IS SIDELINED. IT'S COMPETING WITH BREAD. THERE'S A LOT OF GOOD BREAD OUT THERE"

and it was a big overriding button, a big distortion pedal that he pressed and everyone listened," says Singh. "It was a very simple thing to do and that's what they're doing now, the simple button is racism."

Turning to those Anglo-Asians who hope that Brexit may mean it's easier for those from the subcontinent to come to the UK if free movement from the EU ends, he's especially scathing: "They haven't lived, what have they been doing all their fucking lives if they didn't clock on? It's very sad."

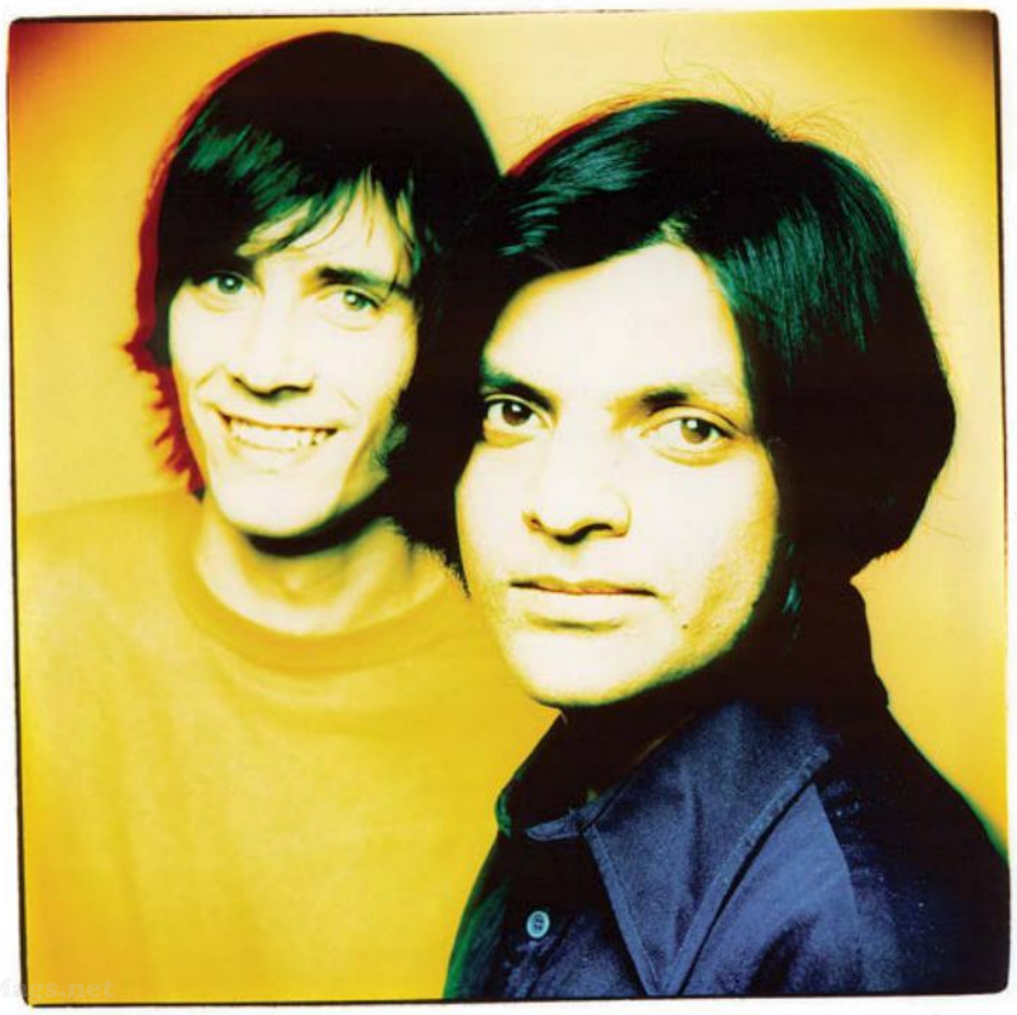
Singh's own experience of racism was intrinsic to Cornershop's formation. "The group started through racism that I got when I was an ents officer [in Preston] on a sabbatical role with the union, and that was extraordinary because you wouldn't expect it to be in higher education, so it comes from all sorts of areas," says Singh.

"And in a way I think it's quite right that it came from higher education because the higher up the tree people go, the sadder things still are. Governments aren't any better than a students' union for setting standards. They're all a bunch of bastard liars."

This anger fuelled the early Cornershop, the band that burnt a picture of Morrissey for a *Melody Maker* photoshoot and provocatively released their 1993 debut EP, *In The Days Of Ford Cortina*, on 'curry-coloured' vinyl. The anger and political engagement also made the association with Riot Grrrl bands such as then Wiiija labelmates Huggy Bear seem the most natural thing in the world. Like Cornershop, the Riot Grrrls were making up their own rules, even to the extent of excluding Cornershop.

"I had friends who I pushed Riot Grrrlism to them, and within a few months they were saying: 'We don't want you here, we're having our own meeting,'" recalls Singh. "And you think, 'Oh, fucking hell, right, I'm out.'"

"At a practical level, being outsiders was tough. "It was almost impossible for us to exist as a band and, thinking back to those times, we had different band members in different cities and we'd be meeting up to do gigs," says Ayres. "I remember driving on one tour from Hayes in Middlesex, at the pressing plant where I worked, to a gig in Cardiff, overnight, back to work, not even going home, straight to work, and then leaving again in the afternoon to go to Nottingham and then driving back through the night, back to work, then going up to Norwich, same thing – day after day getting a few hours' sleep here and there, in my Mini up and down the motorway."



Roger Sargent

Cornershop's Tjinder and Ben budge up to make room for collaborator Bubbley Kaur on the sofa

When commercial success did come, most notably in 1998 when Fatboy Slim's remix of *Brimful Of Asha* reached No. 1, it had been hard won – and ironically the success of *Brimful* arguably took attention from the band as album artists. "We've had to work a little bit harder for everything we've got," sighs Singh. "That hurts a bit, it hurts *a lot*."

EARNING A CRUST

As you get older, of course, it gets harder to sustain a heavy workload. At the Tabernacle, a cafe-cum-events space housed in a former chapel in Ladbroke Grove, supping lime explosions (non-alcoholic, Singh quit drinking eight years ago), the conversation of Singh and Ayres is peppered with the concerns of early middle age – kids, houses and an underlying Brexistential angst over what the next year will bring.

Plus, anyway, how do you cut through in a digital world, where there are so many distractions? "I think music itself is sidelined," says Singh. "Music is competing with bread. There's a lot of good bread out there, there's a lot of good coffees and there's a lot of good places to go out."

Nevertheless, there's still a sense of enthusiasm whenever the duo talk about music, notably in the half-joking way Singh keeps bringing the conversation back to Glasgow-based 90s lo-fi duo Melody Dog, plus his son's love of drum 'n' bass "which I hate – and I'm supposed to hate it and I'm glad I hate it". And a frustration that, for various reasons, Cornershop are sitting on so many partly completed songs. "What happened in the past is I would have lyrics, and songs would start and I'd have more lyrics and it would get finished, so lyrics were the engine and it drove songs to be finished," says Singh.

In contrast, the music has often been leading the way with the new material. "It's different to how I used to do it," he adds. "It's more like having the body and putting the brain in, and so it's taken a bit longer. I suppose the compunction to do it, as well, hasn't really been there. Especially in the 90s, we were working and there were other groups, very different groups, and they were doing stuff that we were inspired by, thinking that's really something, to make us want to work. And I don't get that from a lot of music nowadays – at all actually."

So what keeps them going and releasing music via their own Ample Play label? "One thing that does keep us pushing is that when we do record a song or a demo, we're still amazed by the creation of something that we listen back to and realise we can go forwards, be worthwhile," says Ayres. Which brings us back to the prospect of a new album and, looking ahead, the idea that a Cornershop album in 2019, when Britain is due to leave the EU, might just be even better timed, albeit for all the wrong reasons. Or perhaps it would have been easier if Cornershop had just split. After all, getting back together is a sure way to gain some attention. "Yeah, that was the stupidest thing we ever did, never breaking up," says Singh, "All these suckers re-forming as if they're God's gift…"

"If we'd split up after every album and then re-formed, it would have been great," agrees Ayres. How about if we pretend Cornershop had split up for the purposes of this article? "But that's a lie, we never split up," says Singh. "This is what we have to do? No, no. We're too proud to split up." ●

Joe Dilworth

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SATURDAY

Hookworms are one of the year's biggest success stories. **Jonathan Wright** hears strange tales of self-reliance, reinvention and touring – but only in the evenings, at the weekend or during the holidays…

Don't give up the day job. It used to be a jibe thrown at musicians and bands who, to put it politely, weren't quite up to snuff. These days, though, as demonstrated by the remarkable year in which Leeds electronic-psychedelic quintet Hookworms' *Microshift* LP crashed the Top 20, it may be time to amend that barbed comment, to make it into a question: *why* give up the day job?

"It's impossible to do [Hookworms] full-time," says frontman Matthew 'MJ' Johnson, as he reflects on the economics of the contemporary music biz. "Look at Wild Beasts," he adds, who announced their split in 2017, citing financial stress as one of the key reasons for calling it a day: "One of them said he was still living in a shared house sharing a bedroom with his girlfriend, and it's like, 'What's the point in doing this?' I'm 33, I don't want to have to live like that, and I think we all have jobs that we enjoy, and we have social lives, and playing music for us is just a hobby – and I think it's nice like that because I don't think the band would still be together if we'd tried to do it full-time."

Which isn't the same as saying that Hookworms are anything less than a professionally run outfit. Just the opposite, in fact. In a band where everyone has a full-time job, so that MJ, for instance, operates his own Suburban Home studio in the Leeds suburb of Kirkstall, time is precious.

"You don't realise how pro we are," says MJ. "My day job, I work with bands all the time, so I see how incoherent most bands are with the way they manage their work. Even bands that have management, booking agents, they're useless most of them, and we are really tightly well run in terms of the band."

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A tricky balancing act, then. On the other hand, it's possible to overstate difficulties that can seem straightforward to deal with from the inside. "We just have to play gigs at the weekend – really," laughs guitarist Johnny 'JW' Wilkinson.

It's a remark that explains how Hookworms come to meet up with *Long Live Vinyl* after their soundcheck at Sea Change, a festival organised by the good people of Drift Records in Totnes. Prosaically, it's a bank holiday weekend and so, despite the long trip, there's still plenty of time to get here and to drive back up north.

Yet there's nothing prosaic about the band's music. Confirming that *Microshift* was a huge leap forward from its fuzzier, more overtly psych-rock influenced predecessors, *Pearl Mystic* (2013) and *The Hum* (2014), Hookworms will play a soaring set that shows off their ability to mix the motorik pulse of krautrock with euphoric, pop-infused choruses rooted in dance music.

This makes it all the more remarkable that, at the end of 2017, the band were worried how *Microshift*, released by Domino in February 2018, would be received. And perhaps with good reason. After releasing *The Hum*, Hookworms decided to take a new approach, to invest in electronics and move their music in a new direction. As a band associated with the psych-rock scene, there was a risk of alienating their existing audience. Add in the lingering fallout from MJ's studio, which also serves as the band's HQ, being flooded in late 2015, and this was a delicate moment in the band's history.

"We've tried our best to keep away from the psych-rock scene because generally I think we find it quite rockist, we find it politically disengaged, we find it very male-dominated," says MJ. "And I guess you don't know if the people that like the music that we make now, we didn't know if they were there, we didn't know if it was any good. You second-guess yourself when you spend so long making a record."

TRUST THE PROCESS

"Just to do something different, it's going to go one of two ways isn't it?" adds keyboard player Matthew 'MB' Benn. "People are going to like it more or less, you know? We just figured, throw in some elements we hadn't used before, synthesisers and drum machines. I don't know, when I listen back to it now, it just sounds like Hookworms. What were we worrying about?"

A key to why it sounds like Hookworms lies in the band's approach, which, according to drummer Jonathan 'JN' Nash, is something that more journalists should ask about. "Making the music is always the trickiest bit to get organised," he says, "but it's the bit that nobody ever asks us about."

Go on then, we'll bite, what's the process? As the band describe it, although things vary from song to song, there's a lot of jamming and listening back to rough recordings. Recording a Hookworms LP is about self-editing. It's also groove-based music, with initial versions of songs stretching out over 20 minutes and more. "We tend to do a lot of work on getting the bass and drums locked," says MB. Yet – and here may lie one key reason why Hookworms' music is so

"WE ALL HAVE JOBS THAT WE ENJOY. I DON'T THINK THE BAND WOULD BE TOGETHER IF WE'D TRIED TO DO IT FULL-TIME"

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AFTER THE FLOOD

An underwater studio was not in the band's plans

On Boxing Day 2015, MJ's Suburban Home Studio was flooded when the River Aire broke its banks. "I was in the middle of moving, so all my records were there, my books," he remembers. "I lost almost everything I owned. My car was written off as well. The band didn't really come into it at all. It was just finding a way of being able to work again. I'm still about seven grand in debt from paying to rebuild the studio."

With the help of MB, he organised a crowd-funding initiative: "People who were in bands that I'd looked up to since I was a kid, American bands, donated money and that was wild and so nice. And I got so many nice emails from people as well, and so many friends came and helped paint it, rebuild it, it's been wicked. It was entirely, by the end, a positive experience and really nice. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to do it all again next year because the government have cancelled all of the flood defences they've promised in the Kirkstall area, so I can't get insurance on the studio."

Still, on the plus side, he's "learnt carpentry now", he can lay a floor and install an aircon machine, and knows definitively that, "the army don't lend you sandbags".

MJ remains hugely grateful for the way people, including competitors at other Leeds studios, rallied around: "If a fucking plumbers got flooded, would all of the other plumbers come around and held them rebuild?" Errm, probably not, they'd probably say he's a dodgy plumber. MJ (to a backdrop of giggling): "Yeah, that was a bad example…"

More seriously, without the studio, it's difficult to see how Hookworms could continue to work as they do. MB: "We get to spend so much time labouring over [our music], and that's only because we don't pay per hour at someone else's studio."

distinctive – it's then, once the bones of the songs are in place, that MJ adds in melody lines.

MJ: "If you listen to most of the records, the bass especially doesn't follow the melodic structure of the songs."

MB: "That's because it existed already."

MJ: "It's because I wrote a song on top of the bassline."

MB: "And I'm far too stubborn to change the bassline."

MJ: "Sometimes I get him to do it, though, and it's really satisfying."

Cue laughter. There's something fascinating here in that it's an approach that has parallels in the way Hookworms' music ebbs and flows. Moreover, MJ's lyrics deal with subjects – depression, anxiety, masculinity as a negative force, his father's Alzheimer's – that often seem at odds with the music's euphoric qualities. In short, tension and contrast are inherent to the music Hookworms create. For those not acquainted with the band, imagine a kind of British Flaming Lips, with all the vaulting imagination that implies, but where all concerned are the kind of down-to-earth people you'd trust to load your dishwasher efficiently, without breaking anything.

MJ's studio, too, is central to the way the band work. Indeed, this may be a point at which it's a positive advantage to be a part-time band because of the way having ready access to a studio enables Hookworms to work steadily and gradually, honing ideas over time so that, for example, an EP that was never released (MJ: "because it was crap") was reappropriated and reworked for *Microshift*.

"There was a conversation between people involved in helping our band, and the idea of doing it differently came up, going to a studio, working with a record producer outside," says MJ, "and then someone else said, 'I don't think anything needs to change', and that was really

"WE'RE NOT TRYING TO GET TO SOME UNKNOWN DESTINATION, WE'RE IN THE PLACE WE WANT TO BE. THIS IS WILD"

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heartening. I can't imagine us working in any other way because the studio is intrinsic to how we work."

There are also parallels between this musical self-reliance and the way the band are, to return to where we began, *professionally* organised. MJ records the music, JW designs the artwork, guitarist Sam 'EO' Shjipstone (pale and interesting, doesn't say much) does the accounts and MB undertakes the band's day-to-day management. "People are often surprised when they email us or ring us and it's just us," says MJ. "There's no management, there's nothing in-between."

ENVIABLE AUTONOMY

"We've had a long time to work it out for ourselves," says MB. "We've had nearly 10 years and we've made mistakes with booking agents, and we've made mistakes when we booked our own shows, getting ripped off or whatever, but you learn and get to a stage where you're actually quite self-sufficient as a business. It's weird to view something you do as a hobby with your friends as that, but you kind of have to. It would be unintelligent not to realise you're running a business."

Arguably one downside to this, though, is that Hookworms now have to deal with a new level of success without any outside help. Yet they're adept at squaring up to issues and problems, as becomes clear when they talk about problems around behaviour at shows. "In the UK, we got a few reports of groping, people being sexually assaulted and people being abusive, unnecessarily in other people's space, just being unpleasant," says MB.

"I think those things happen everywhere and I think because of how we're fairly outspoken those women feel like they can tell us," adds MJ, "not in a humblebrag way, that's the only reason we know about. We need to work harder, it's on our shoulders and our peers and everyone involved. It's really, really important that we do something about it."

One way to make time to meet such challenges, and ensuring accessibility to venues is another issue they mention, would of course be to quit the day jobs, but you can't imagine that happening. For all the disadvantages of having to go to rehearsal when, in the words of JW, who works in education: "You've had a hundred students shouting at you all day," Hookworms enjoy enviable autonomy. They have the independence to blank out time next year to begin work on the next phase, whatever that may be. Even if they sometimes have to turn down opportunities, as allowing individual members a veto over what the band does – lest, in MJ's words, doing something "causes them trouble at work or it causes them financial stress" – is part of the ethos of Hookworms.

"We don't need this extra *stuff*, because we're not trying to get to some unknown destination, we're in the place we want to be," says JN.

"I think we're further than we want to be," corrects MJ. "We're much further than we expected. This is wild. It's super-nice and if it all stopped tomorrow I'd be like, 'That was wicked'. But this is further than I ever, ever expected to get and it's cool, that's fine. I'm having a nice time with my friends and that's all that really matters." ●

SEE THEM LIVE

This autumn, Hookworms play SWX Bristol (13 October), The Crossing Digbeth (10 November), O2 Ritz Manchester (17 November) and O2 Forum Kentish Town (24 November).

INTO THE MYSTICAL

Brit rockers Uriah Heep's fourth album, *Demons And Wizards,* was the first with what is regarded as the definitive line-up, and saw them create a dark fantasy world. **Sean Egan** explores the band's musical high point and BMG's latest Art Of The Album reissue...

Concert day, Italy. Uriah Heep's Ken Hensley is confronted by a bewildering sight. A female fan has turned up with the legend 'Today is only yesterday's tomorrow' tattooed on her arm. The words are a line from *Circle Of Hands*, a track written by Hensley for Heep's esteemed 1972 album *Demons And Wizards*.

He freely admits it to be "a really not tremendously intellectual statement." However, the fan's solemn reaction to his lyrics is not unusual: "I've seen T-shirts made with it." "It captured everyone's imagination," observes his colleague Mick Box of such Heep wordcraft. "It's certainly a long way from Moon-in-June."

Some 46 years later, the fascination inspired by *Demons And Wizards*' mysticism-infused music goes on: the record is the subject of a new luxurious reissue in BMG's Art Of The Album series. Although *Demons And Wizards* was Heep's fourth LP, it was the first to feature what to most fans is the band's definitive line-up. Following much personnel upheaval, vocalist David Byron, guitarist Mick Box and keyboardist Ken Hensley were joined by bassist Gary Thain and drummer Lee Kerslake. "While Lee was powering à la John Bonham, Gary was off with his wandering basslines," reflects Box. "Gary was the most musical bass player I've ever heard," says Hensley. "The combination of Gary and Lee was the final link to us extracting the maximum from our music. It was perfect. Putting the new line-up together definitely inspired me as a writer."

WHAT THE DICKENS?

When Uriah Heep, named after a Dickens character, made their long-playing debut in 1970 with *Very 'Eavy... Very 'Umble*, Hensley still occupied the role of minimally contributing new boy. *Demons And Wizards* saw him complete his graduation to the status of main composer. "If you're going to do an album, you put all the songs on the table and the strong ones survive, no matter who wrote them," says Box.

Byron was a singer of remarkable range, and Hensley reveals that he would compose specifically for his extraordinary voice. "He made the lyrics come to life. I knew the words that he could express really well, I knew the keys he liked to sing in and I knew exactly the types of songs that he liked to sing, which were essentially pop."

Which raises the fact that there has been much debate about which musical category Heep can be slotted into. Most have them posited as heavy metal or prog, but few have categorised them in the way Hensley does. "I was writing basically pop songs that the band was turning into rock songs," is his surprising assertion. ▶

"If you're going to do an album, you put all the songs on the table and the strong ones survive, no matter who wrote them"

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Uriah Heep are taking no prisoners as they get tanked up while promoting their second album *Salisbury*

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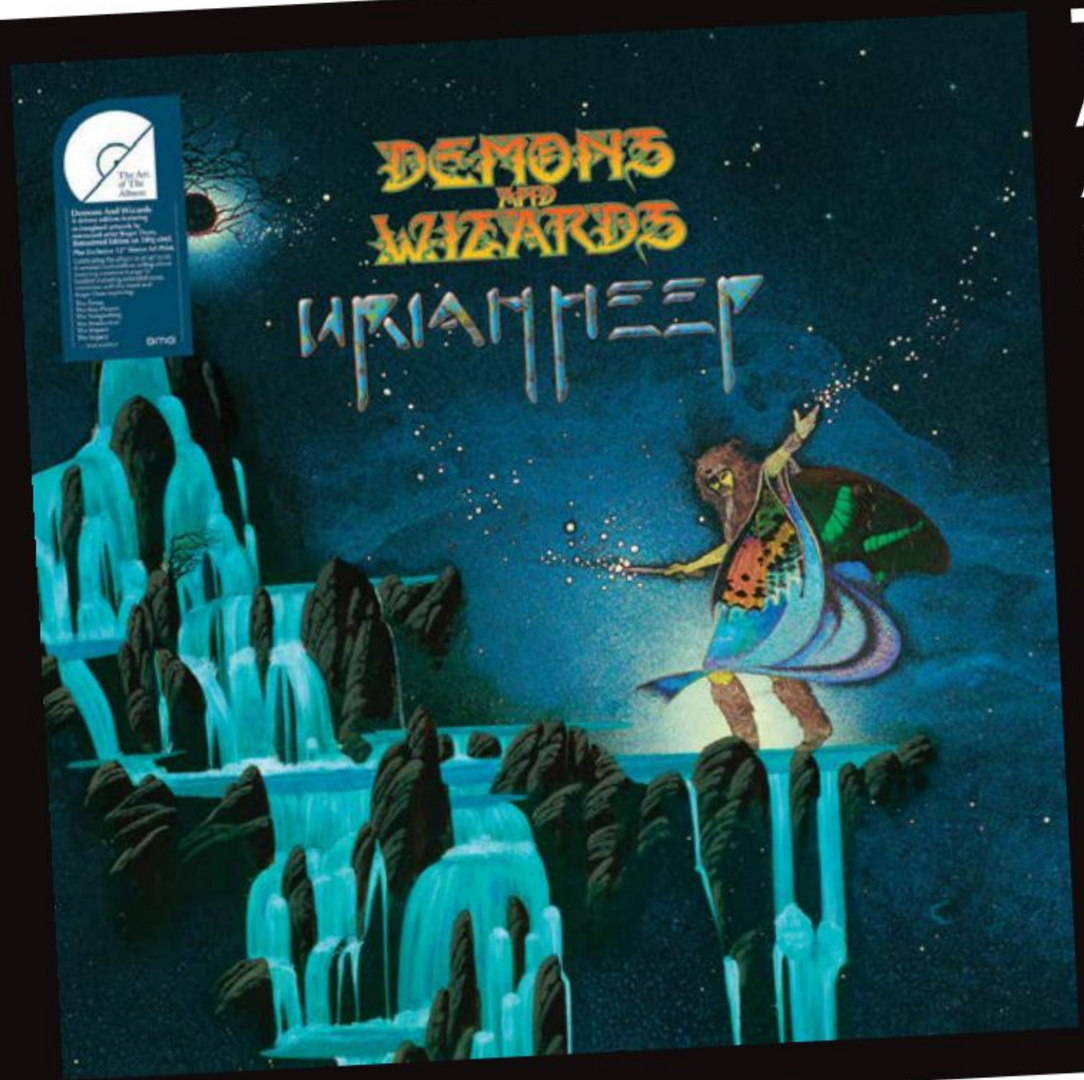

THE PICASSO OF PROG

After a run of dodgy covers, Roger Dean nailed it for Heep's fourth

Although Roger Dean had painted plenty of album covers by 1972, his name and phantasmagorical style weren't yet as instantly recognisable as they would become. As such, Mick Box suspects that Dean came to the attention of Heep's management that year because "Roger was punting around his artworks". Box and Hensley claim the band had no real input into Dean's *Demons And Wizards* sleeve. Both, though, were delighted with it.

Hensley describes Heep's albums hitherto as having "a bunch of very questionable covers". The debut featured a grotesque cobwebbed face, follow-up *Salisbury* an irrelevant tank picture and *Look At Yourself* a gimmicky mirror design. "We had taken a giant step upwards musically and I felt that his artwork matched that step up," avers Hensley of Dean's cover. Box notes: "With the music and the album, it was the first time when they were intrinsically linked together." Hensley adds of the Art Of The Album reissue (available on CD and 180g vinyl): "I like the way he's reworked it for this particular package. He's been able to really sharpen up the colours and the outlines."

For his part, Dean was delighted to be working for Heep, noting in the sleevenotes to the reissue: "Strangely, among all the albums and bands I was working with, Uriah Heep were the only band who were looking into that world themselves. Working with Ken and Mick gave me a chance to develop those ideas."

TRACKLISTING

1. *The Wizard*
2. ***Traveller In Time***
3. *Easy Livin'*
4. ***Poet's Justice***
5. *Circle Of Hands*
6. ***Rainbow Demon***
7. *All My Life*
8. ***Paradise***
9. *The Spell*

As with all Heep's previous albums, *Demons And Wizards* was recorded at Lansdowne Studios, West London under the auspices of Gerry Bron, who was not only their producer, but also their manager, song publisher and record company. Bron was trying to obtain a return on his investment in the group via a timetable that dictated two albums per annum and touring most of the year. As such, sessions were not extended affairs. Yet despite spending no longer on this album than they had their previous LPs, it was Heep's most layered work yet. "That's another reflection on the chemistry between us," Hensley says. "Once we refined the arrangement, it would go down in one or two takes."

The album kicked off in a deceptively low-key manner with a winding acoustic guitar figure, but *The Wizard* soon exploded into a full-band arrangement. Hensley took sonic inspiration for his fantasia from a peculiarly prosaic source. "I had headphones on as I was writing this song in my living room and I'm thinking, 'I can hear violins', but it was actually the kettle," he recalls. "My wife was making tea. It whistled perfectly in tune with the song, so we used it on the recording." The biggest legacy to the band by the briefly employed bassist Mark Clarke was the melody and vocal to *The Wizard*'s bridge, for which he received a co-writing credit.

The muscular, melodramatic *Traveller In Time* is a Box/Byron/Kerslake collaboration, but Hensley chipped in on the lyric. Hensley says: "I was talking about the fact that we're constantly travelling, constantly moving. Rather than just writing a bland lyric about, 'Well, yesterday I was in Frankfurt,' I just let it take a little bit more of a mystical direction."

Easy Livin' took its sardonic inspiration from the band's punishing schedule. Box fondly recalls a cab ride from the studio: "We were being driven really hard between touring and recording. We said, 'This is easy living' as a sarcastic remark and then Ken remembered that." Though the band had been in Lansdowne for three days straight, Hensley set to work immediately. "I got in my house, made a cup of tea, sat down at the piano and the song was finished in 15 minutes." The galloping result wasn't a song about a rock star's tribulations, however, but instead deployed the title words to describe domestic bliss. It became the band's only Top 40 US single.

BELOW THE BELT

Poet's Justice was a Box/Hensley/Kerslake contribution. "I've written quite a lot of poetry since I was about nine years old," explains Hensley of the title. "It's the poet getting his own back on people who don't like what he writes."

Hensley's *Circle Of Hands*, which closed Side 1, took its cue from a female Heep fan who invited the composer to a seance. Hensley accepted, although admits his motivation was located below the belt.

"I had headphones on as I was writing this song and I'm thinking 'I can hear violins', but it was the kettle. My wife was making tea"

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Uriah Heep (l to r): Gary Thain, David Byron, Mick Box, Lee Kerslake and Ken Hensley

"We sat in this circle. Somebody started muttering weird stuff. I'm sitting there holding hands with two girls, so I'm fine. Then my imagination ran away with the rest of it." He ruefully concedes of the composition: "That's about all I got out of it." The multi-part creation of over six minutes is notable for some towering choral work. "Normally, we used harmonies as an instrument, but on that particular song it needed almost a gospelly thing," explains Box.

Rainbow Demon was a menacing-sounding opener to Side 2, but writer Hensley points out that it contains an ambiguity. "I wanted to make the guy a good guy, so I combined the demon part with the rainbow part. The lyric tries to go in a positive direction."

In Box, Byron and Kerslake's playful *All My Life*, Byron alternates dexterously between sweet cooing and full-throated yodelling. Like *Easy Livin'*, the song displays an unexpectedly tender side to a band some lazily lumped in with cock rockers. "I'm fascinated by issues of the heart, so I can find myself writing some super-sensitive things," offers Hensley. Says Box: "You look at songs like *Rain* and *Easy Road*, there's a lot of that

Guitarist Mick Box was one of Heep's founding members, and is still active with the band today

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"That whole piece is one of my absolute favourite musical moments in my career with the band. I remember thinking at the time, 'Did I actually write that?'"

side to us." Too nice to write a sexist song? "We just wouldn't go there," Box replies. "It's not our thing."

The brooding *Paradise* portrays a break-up in epic terms. "I was such a failure at it earlier in my life," says composer Hensley of what he terms "the whole inter-human relationship thing." He adds: "The beauty of being a songwriter is you can blame it on everybody else."

Referring to the immediately subsequent Uriah Heep album, Hensley says that *Demons And Wizards*' sprawling closing track *The Spell* is "kind of the start of *The Magician's Birthday*. It's the conversation between good and evil." He is proud of the central respite "where we did some tremendous block harmonies, which was just David and myself overdubbing and overdubbing and swapping parts."

Paradise (5:10) and *The Spell* (7:32) were lengthy in themselves, but conjoined became gargantuan. Box: "We felt that they would mould together quite nicely, so it finally became quite proggy in the end, by linking them via phase effect." "That whole piece is one of my absolute favourite musical moments in my career with the band," says Hensley. "I remember thinking at the time, 'Did I actually write that?'"

Demons And Wizards continued Uriah Heep's incrementally improving commercial success, making No. 20 in the UK and No. 23 Stateside. Moreover, for a brief period it convinced the often disdainful music press. *Rolling Stone* notoriously responded to Heep's first album with the line: "If this group makes it I'll have to commit suicide," but even they gave *Demons And Wizards* a good write-up.

PEAK HEEP

Uriah Heep's critical favour didn't last long, nor ultimately did their definitive line-up. Hensley quit the ranks in 1980, and Byron and Thain were fired, both later sadly dying prematurely. Even the stalwart Kerslake ultimately departed the band in 2007. Heep, though, still continue to this day under Box's auspices, releasing their 25th album, *Living The Dream,* in September.

The reissue of *Demons And Wizards* demonstrates the rich history on which the continued viability of the Heep brand name is based. "These were very special times in my life and I'm thankful to see all of this being revived in a very classy way," says Hensley of *Demons And Wizards*.

"I'm a little reluctant to use the word masterpiece, but I definitely think it was our musical high point. Everything was right. It was a peak moment for the band." ●

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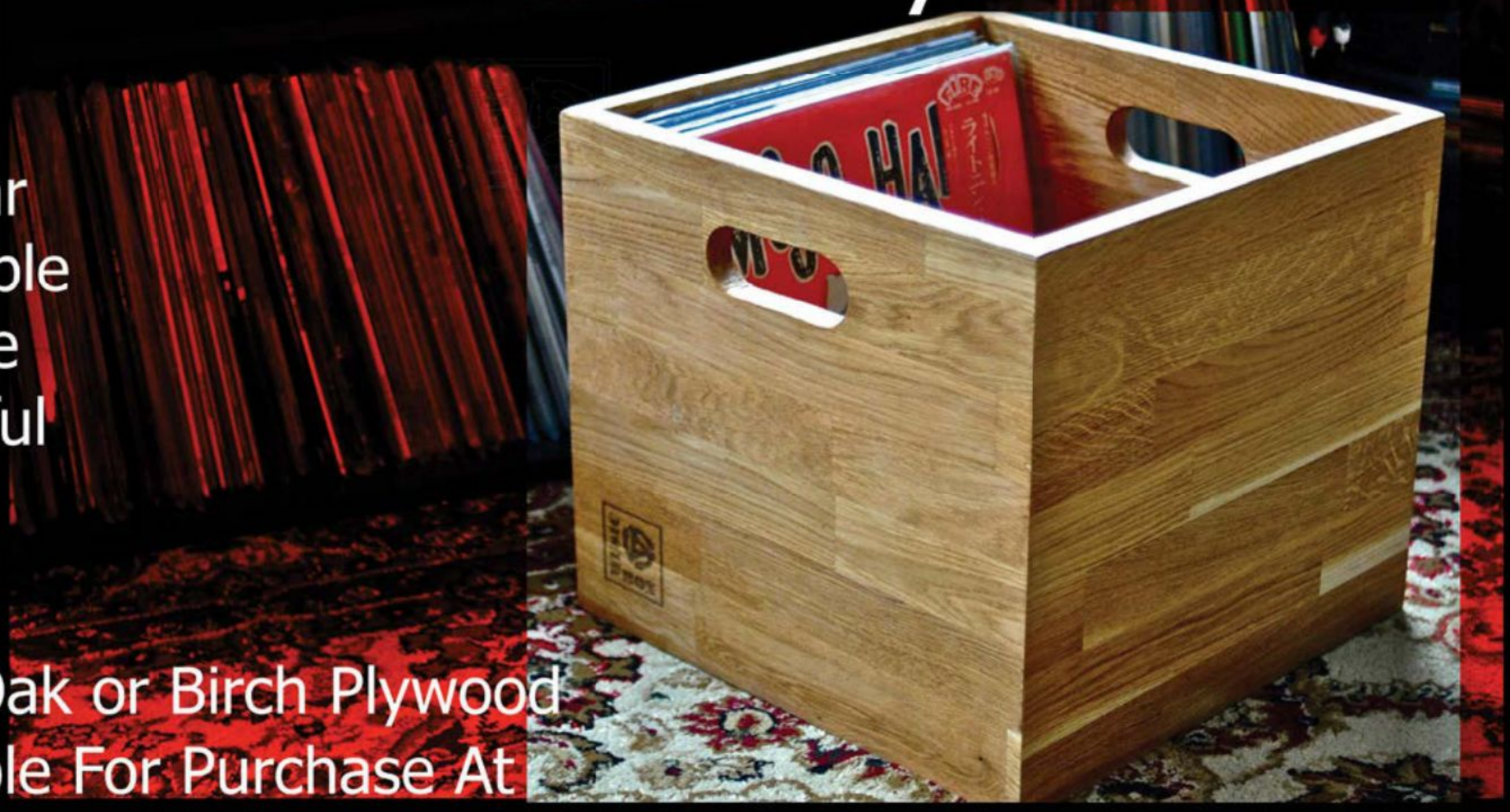

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STADIUM TO STADIUM

An art-rock superstar hiring a disco producer could have been the end of David Bowie's career. Instead, he went global. With a new boxset chronicling his stadium years, **John Earls** speaks to five key collaborators to get the inside story of his most turbulent decade

Let's Dance should never have been the album to turn David Bowie into a global superstar. It's a disco album made at the height of the fallout from the 'Disco Sucks' campaign which, barbaric as it was in hindsight, succeeded in turning the public from dance music to the synthetic delights of New Romanticism instead. That was a movement Bowie had been at the forefront of with 1980's *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)*, so the notion of hiring Chic mainman Nile Rodgers as co-producer seemed retrograde.

Rodgers was a hire that Bowie was having to fund himself. Having reached the end of his deal with RCA, he wanted to shop around for a record label – he was determined to offer any new home a finished album made with no interference. He also wanted an album full of hits – his reason for dispensing with Tony Visconti, seen as too purely artistic to go fully commercial. Which was fine, but Nile Rodgers was surely past his best by 1982.

"From 1980 to 1982, my records did nothing," Rodgers tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "After the Disco Sucks movement happened in '79, I thank God I'd signed a deal with Diana Ross and managed to get one more hit, thanks to her album *Diana* in 1980. It took meeting David Bowie to rescue me."

The reason Bowie succeeded in placing himself in the mainstream was that, unusually, he had fully developed *Let's Dance*'s eight songs – usually, he began an album with just sketches of ideas. Determination to have hit singles focused his mind, but initially Rodgers couldn't see what Bowie was aiming for. "David told me: 'I want to make a hit album, and I want you to make it,'" Rodgers recalls. "We went to his house in Switzerland, and he said he wanted my interpretation of songs he'd released earlier – *China Girl*, *Cat People*. That was fine, but I remember when he wrote *Let's Dance* that he was so excited, going: 'I got this great song!' But I didn't get it – he'd told me we were going to do a hits album, yet *Let's Dance* sounded like a folk-rock song." Rodgers assembled a team of musicians to work on the album at Bowie's Swiss base, focusing mainly on its title track. "We played it once, and that's the arrangement you hear on the finished song," says Rodgers. "David wasn't sure at first, but then he was: 'You're right, it's a hit!'"

POWERING THROUGH

The team duly went to Rodgers' favoured studio, The Power Station in New York, to record the full album, knowing now the template of how it should sound. Bowie was known throughout his career for working quickly, taking just one or two takes to record his vocals. Once the songs were demoed, work on *Let's Dance* was even quicker than usual – for once, Bowie didn't play any instruments, wanting to concentrate solely on his voice. This was fine with Rodgers, who was accustomed to stealing studio time on the cheap at night. "David didn't have the money to lock down a studio for full days," he explains. "David paying for the recording of *Let's Dance* was part of its beauty. We were done making it in 17 days of eight-hour shifts, the easiest and most rewarding record of my career."

It's an album divisive in its reputation among Bowie's fanbase, but is comfortably his biggest seller. "It's done 11 million albums," notes Rodgers. "Bowie had never sold anything like that in his life before. It was extraordinary."

EMI had signed Bowie for a reported $17.5m, but even they were taken aback by the scale of his success. Carlos Alomar, Bowie's guitarist since

"BOWIE HAD NEVER SOLD ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN HIS LIFE BEFORE. IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY"

NILE RODGERS ON LET'S DANCE

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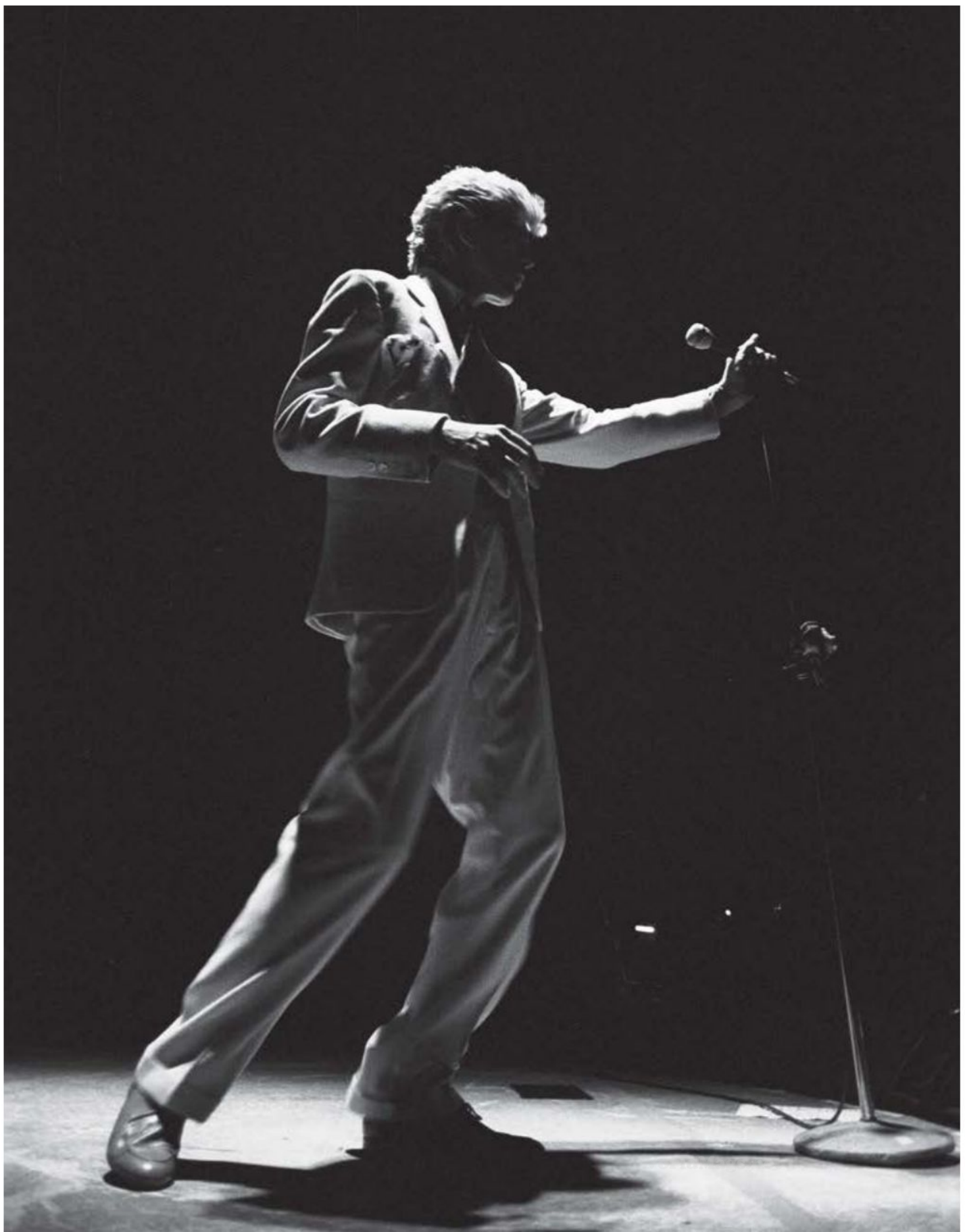
Hugh Padgham (right) took *Let's Dance* co-producer Nile Rodgers' (left) place behind the desk for the *Tonight* album

Bowie went straight from the *Serious Moonlight* tour and into the studio to record the follow-up to *Let's Dance*

Young Americans in 1975, hadn't played on *Let's Dance*, having been given two weeks' notice to do so. But he was back in the fold for the accompanying *Serious Moonlight* tour. "The tour promoters were scrabbling around, upgrading from 5,000-seat arenas to 60,000-seat stadiums," laughs Alomar. "David had to spend a lot of his own money to make the show bigger, and the record company were screwing him over in not paying him back on time. David would come in showing us his concepts for the stadiums on cardboard sets, and it was all we could do to keep up with his vision. He had his fingers in every pie, working with designers, choreographers, everybody, while trying to juggle a family life. It was his dream come true, but his juggling act impacted on every area of his life."



Naturally, EMI weren't going to let Bowie take another three-year gap before his next album. Alomar recalls of the genesis of what became *Tonight*: "We were on the road, bigger than ever, and we were all deranged. David was mad. And then we're called off the road by the record company to go in and do a studio album."

Featuring five covers and four originals, Bowie said half-heartedly that *Tonight* was "keeping my hand in". Ironically for an album that sounds rushed, part of its problem is that recording *Tonight* was as comparatively sluggish as *Let's Dance* was speedy.

It was recorded at Le Studio, a residential base near a ski resort 100 miles north of Montreal, where The Police had made *Synchronicity* the year before. The producer of *Synchronicity* was Hugh Padgham, who stepped in as engineer on *Tonight* at the recommendation of *Let's Dance* engineer Bob Clearmountain.

Like the rest of Bowie's team, Padgham is unable to remember if Le Studio was his suggestion, or if EMI had noted The Police's success and, as Padgham puts it, "suggested it to David as somewhere miles from anywhere with no distractions so he could focus". Whoever's call it was, it didn't work, with Bowie soon fidgety.

ICON TO ICON

What also didn't help was hiring Derek Bramble as producer. The bassist in *Boogie Nights* hitmakers Heatwave alongside *Thriller* songwriter Rod Temperton, Bramble had just started making an impact as the producer for soul singer Jaki Graham. "Derek was a really nice guy, but he'd only produced one or two singles," says Padgham. "Then he started criticising David's vocals, and me and other people started thinking,

'hang on, who is this guy?'. In all my 35 years of making records, David was both the best and the fastest singer I'd ever worked with. But Derek would be finding reasons for David to sing his vocals again. For someone of David's experience to be told there's something wrong with his vocals, he started to get a bit pissed off."

After a two-week break in recording, Bramble didn't return. By then, the title track of *Tonight* had been recorded. Tina Turner was back in vogue thanks to *Let's Stay Together* and it made perfect commercial sense for her to feature on *Tonight*, originally sung by Iggy Pop on his *Lust For Life* album. "Everything about that album was summarised by Tina Turner being available to sing on it," enthuses Carlos Alomar. "Tina became the destination of *Tonight* – all lines pointed towards that end. It was icon to icon. Being in the presence of Tina Turner was an epic moment for David, no lesser than when he hung out with John Lennon."

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT

Hugh Padgham was less enthusiastic. "I was mortified when I found out the album was going to be called *Tonight*," he admits. "*Tonight* and *Blue Jean* were the songs I'd have dropped straight away. Tina was the most amazing singer, but I preferred her earlier songs to the pop stuff she was doing in the 80s. But she was back to being one of the biggest stars of the day and, much as I'd have loved to have said: 'Get rid of *Tonight*', it wouldn't have gone down well."

Alomar, however, insists the duet has merit. "David and Tina duetting was a once-in-a-lifetime moment. Tina was happy, David was happy, I was very happy. We were all happy with it, and it's only later that the critics come in going: 'Blah, blah blah…' Sure, there were songs David didn't like in hindsight on *Tonight* and other records. He'd say: 'Well, I was just doing a filler', like *God Only Knows* on *Tonight*. But he was at peace with the critics, because he knew he did his best with that record. We were thrown in the studio and told 'Perform!' and we did the best we can."

Padgham believes Bowie eventually grew sick of making *Tonight*. "After the break, when I became producer, David's attitude was already: 'Come on guys, we've just got to get this finished'. There was no way I could change the record's direction by then, and I had no function other than to be professional and finish it off."

There were three demos in the studio, simply titled *1*, *2* and *3*, which Iggy Pop was drafted in to help write lyrics for. *1*, based on a Carlos Alomar jam, became album closer *Dancing With The Big Boys* after Bowie and Iggy improvised its lyrics.

"The other two demos didn't have vocals, but they were great, in a similar rock vein to *Dancing With The Big Boys*," Padgham explains of *2* and *3*, which were never revisited. "It would have made the record better if David finished them. But David had gone into *Tonight* thinking it was going to be done in three weeks and he just wanted to get the hell out of there."

Whatever its faults, *Tonight* featured one undoubted classic in *Loving The Alien*, which gives the new boxset its title. Arif Mardin, revered for his work with Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross and Carly Simon, arranged the song's strings.

"It's one of the most stellar string arrangements I've ever heard," smiles Alomar. "Arif gave *Loving The Alien* another layer of soulfulness." Padgham is delighted the boxset is named after the song, saying: "*Tonight* wasn't as huge as *Let's Dance* and David was disparaging about the whole album afterwards. He even said a great song like *Loving The Alien* was sugary. But, 34 years on, I think *Tonight* as a whole isn't bad."

"WE WERE ON THE ROAD, BIGGER THAN EVER, AND WE WERE ALL DERANGED. DAVID WAS MAD"

CARLOS ALOMAR

Bowie described his approach to the *Tonight* album as "keeping my hand in"

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NEVER LET ME DOWN 2018

David Bowie's frustration with *Never Let Me Down* was instant. New boxset *Loving The Alien* finally allowed the album to be remade the way Bowie had envisaged. Its new producer Mario McNulty and guitarist Reeves Gabrels tell us how they turned a neglected album into an off-piste classic…

One of the many triumphs of David Bowie's *Glass Spider* stadium tour in 1987 was that it allowed him to perform the songs from *Never Let Me Down* the way he'd always intended them to sound – meatier, more full-on, shorn of the synthetic, overly busy trappings co-producer David Richards had overseen on the studio versions.

Reeves Gabrels, later Bowie's guitarist and co-writer from Tin Machine through to the *Hours* album a decade later, befriended Bowie during the *Glass Spider* tour and recalls the singer's anguish at letting *Never Let Me Down* slip through his fingers. "David felt he didn't hold his end up on *Never Let Me Down*," reveals Gabrels. "He'd essentially checked out halfway through making the record and let other people finish it. But he always felt there were really good songs on there."

As far back as 1988, Bowie and Gabrels discussed reworking its songs with a more appropriate production – the first song the pair worked on together was a heavy remake of *Look Back In Anger* from *Lodger* for a charity benefit at London's ICA theatre in 1988. "The idea of redoing songs wasn't fashionable," admits Gabrels. "I talked David out of doing it, but periodically over the years David would bring the idea up again."

Bowie suggested remaking *Never Let Me Down* songs for both the *Outside* and *Earthling* albums with Gabrels, but it wasn't until 2008 that his plan came to fruition. He reworked the album's lead single *Time Will Crawl* with Mario McNulty, who had worked on the remastering of some of Bowie's 1970s albums for anniversary editions.

"We wanted to turn the song into something more organic, less cold and clinical than the album," says McNulty. "When David asked me to remake the song, there wasn't one second where he thought I wouldn't be into the idea, and he was right."

Getty

Producer Mario McNulty reworked *Never Let Me Down*

Bowie felt he hadn't given enough of himself on the original version of *Never Let Me Down* and was eager to see it remade

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HEROES TO ZEROES

Bowie was happy with the new *Time Will Crawl*, which appeared on the *iSelect* compilation, but McNulty doesn't recall any concrete talk about developing the idea further. However, as part of the plans for cataloguing his career across the boxsets that began with *Five Years (1969-1973)* in 2015, Bowie said he wanted *Never Let Me Down* to be remade in full, with McNulty to assemble a team of musicians Bowie worked with from 1988 onwards. McNulty, who learned of Bowie's wishes last November, explains: "The people who played on the original record are fabulous musicians, and the original album is also included in the boxset. But David was an ever-evolving artist, and he wasn't interested in looking back on somebody's take who had already been on the album."

As well as Gabrels, McNulty chose drummer Sterling Campbell – who had played on the 2008 *Time Will Crawl* – and Tim Lefebvre, bassist on *Blackstar*. "My approach was as if I'd had a very

Reeves Gabrels is delighted with the transformation of *Never Let Me Down*

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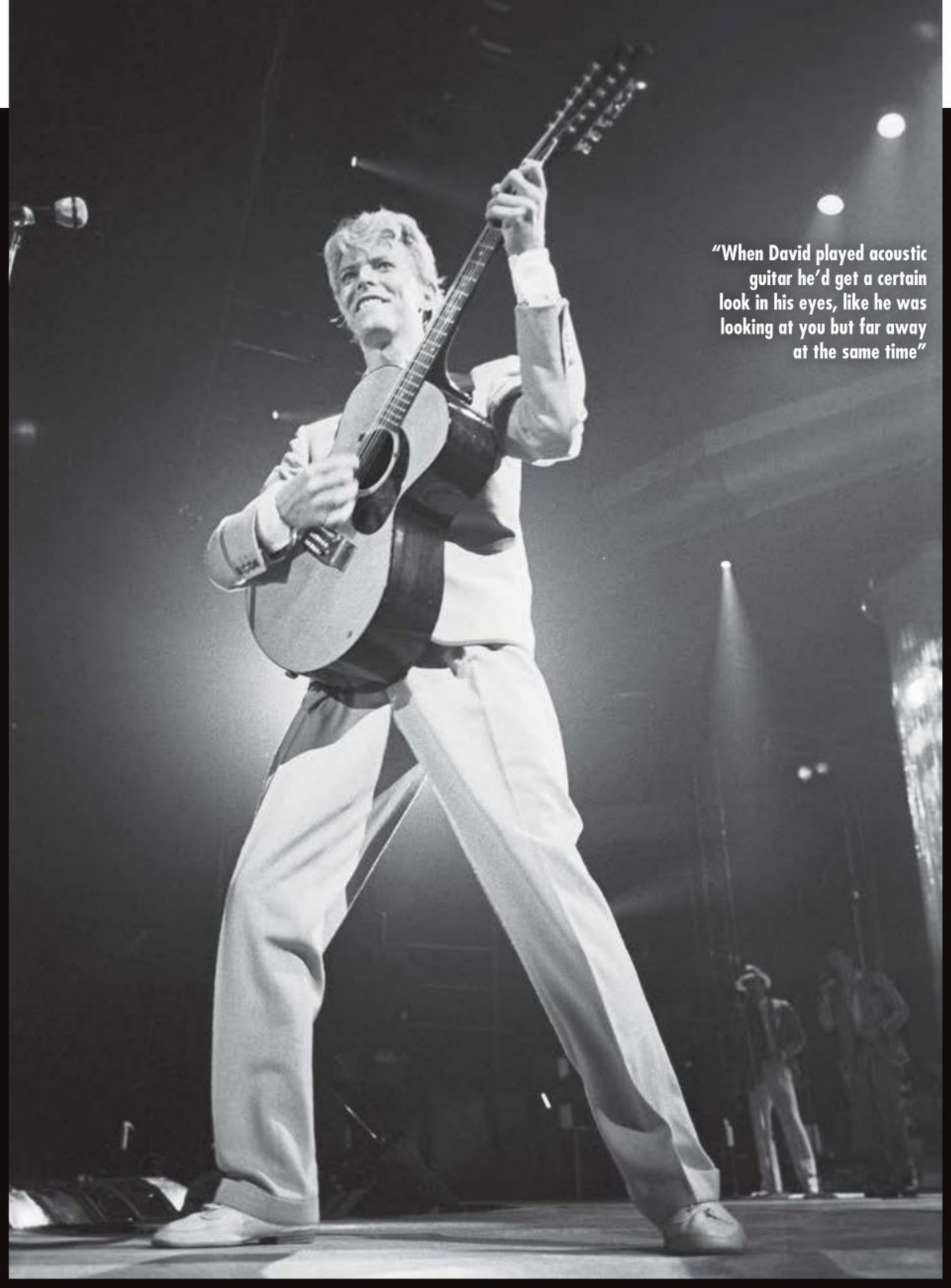

"When David played acoustic guitar he'd get a certain look in his eyes, like he was looking at you but far away at the same time"

fancy demo handed to me," reasons McNulty. "The only distinction was the final vocals had already been done. If there was something else tasteful, I kept it: Carlos Alomar plays a fantastic stuttering guitar on the title track, and some of the backing vocals still work."

On the first day of recording, Gabrels played on *Zeroes*. "All of the players had a close connection to David, so the sessions were sometimes emotional, as you'd expect," he says. "I knew at some point I was going to cry. David and I would always cut our acoustic guitars together, and Mario felt *Zeroes* needed another acoustic guitar as well as David's original. I start playing, and I could hear David's guitar in my left ear and mine in my right. When David played acoustic, he'd get a certain look in his eyes, like he was looking at you but far away at the same time. He'd cross one of his legs, and his foot would bounce while he was playing. I could picture all of that and fell into that same headspace David and I always had but, when I opened my eyes, he wasn't there. Fortunately, I was playing in the room by myself – by the time Mario walked in going: 'Yeah, that's the take', I'd had the chance to compose myself. It was good to get that moment out of the way early."

PRETTIER STAR

McNulty asked the band to imagine Bowie was sat on the studio couch, approving or disapproving of how the sessions were progressing. "We all knew that was an impossible task, but it at least puts you in a headspace of trying to imagine he was there, so you're not just making a record for fun, you're trying to make it for David. He never chose the standard version of anything."

As good as most of the actual songs were, some moments still presented challenges – especially Mickey Rourke's infamously terrible spoken interlude on *Shining Star (Makin' My Love)*, listed as "mid-song rap". On the new album, Rourke has been replaced by Laurie Anderson's glacial voice. "It eventually dawned on me I didn't need a Mickey Rourke-style rap," laughs McNulty. "That was the key to not feeling so burdened by that song. I'd thought about maybe getting a current rapper in, but Laurie sings the original lyrics in a way that's poignant."

Gabrels and McNulty are both delighted at how *Never Let Me Down* has been transformed. So too, to his credit, is the album's guitarist Carlos Alomar. "The original will always be there," he says. "But I love the idea of the new version too. Boxsets are for people who fill their collection, for people like me who love the backstory of a song, who want the book that tells you everything about the artist."

Intriguingly, McNulty doesn't rule out further reworkings of Bowie albums. "Discussions were had," he says. "But I don't think I could or should talk about them. Put it this way: I'm not sure what's in the works."

"ALL THE PLAYERS HAD A CLOSE CONNECTION TO DAVID, SO THE SESSIONS WERE SOMETIMES EMOTIONAL"

REEVES GABRELS

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> **"VERY, VERY FEW PEOPLE IN MUSIC WERE AS CREATIVE WITH VIDEO IDEAS AS DAVID"**
>
> **DAVID MALLET**

The video for *Loving The Alien* was directed by David Mallet, Bowie's regular director from *Ashes To Ashes* on. "David said he wanted to do a video based around the artist De Chirico," says Mallet. "He very badly wanted a scene where it looked like he was walking on water. Nobody could figure out how to do that without it costing millions, but we eventually solved it with a polythene tank and an old tin tray with wheels on it." TV screenings of the video cut a scene where Bowie suffered a nosebleed, but Mallet responds dismissively: "Oh, there was always some wanker wanting to remove something. Very, very few people in music were as creative with video ideas as David – as a team of four, maybe Queen were. And Billy Idol, funnily enough."

BIT OF A LET DOWN

Bowie didn't tour *Tonight* and, though he rehearsed *Loving The Alien*, he decided sensibly his Live Aid set in 1985 should instead be a four-song mini Best Of. He also made his most successful film, *Labyrinth,* and his songwriting was refreshed when he came to make his next album *Never Let Me Down*, though Carlos Alomar remembers: "When we got to the studio, David said: 'Hey Carlos, have you got anything?' and I had to say: 'Nooo… Well, I've got one song I'm working on, *So Tired*.'" Retitled, it became the album's title track.

Having worked on *A Kind Of Magic* for Queen and Iggy Pop's *Blah-Blah-Blah*, David Richards seemed a more sensible choice of producer than Derek Bramble. He wasn't. Bowie's 90s guitarist Reeves Gabrels remembers hearing *Never Let Me Down* on its release, shortly before he became friends with the singer, and admits: "I was playing in alternative bands in Boston, with all the appropriate biases and snobberies. When *Never Let Me Down* came out, we went: 'Oh, wow, that's really disappointing.' It came out in 1987, but it sounded like 1985."

Even Alomar, fiercely loyal to Bowie's ethos, confesses he can't remember Richards' presence at all, saying: "I spoke to David and mingled with him, but I just don't remember him, as regrettable as that sounds. We hung out, had a good time, became mates, but I was so focused on the music, I didn't think about him."

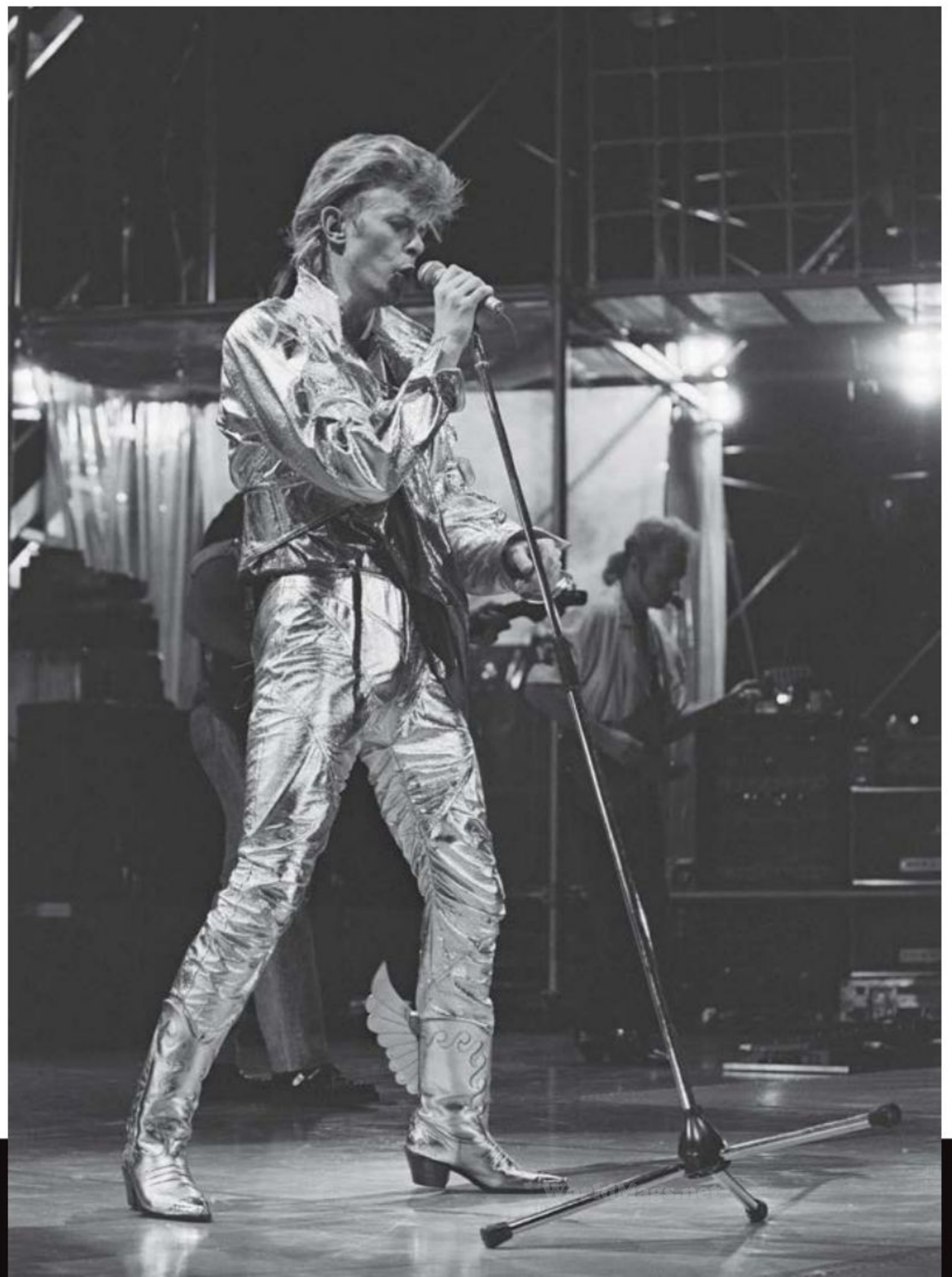
The guitarist is reluctant to criticise *Never Let Me Down*, saying: "I can understand the view of 'If we'd had more time, if we'd made it in a different studio, if we'd had demos David lived with for a long time', but you know what? That's no guarantee you'll make a better record. *Never Let Me Down* didn't go Gold or enter the chart at No. 1 at the time, but other generations have since discovered it."

TOURING WITH THE ALIEN

Three years after *Serious Moonlight* improvised Bowie into the stadiums, the *Glass Spider* tour accompanying *Never Let Me Down* was the first climax of Bowie's stadium years. Mocked in contemporary reviews for being pretentious, *Glass Spider* has been reassessed as the first tour to bring theatricality to stadiums. Its influence is everywhere in modern tours at arena level and above.

David Mallet, who directed the accompanying tour film, says: "Before *Glass Spider*, nobody had done anything with musicians in stadiums apart from jumping up and down playing things. David revolutionised touring and started a whole new concept." Did it feel innovative at the time? "No, it just felt bloody difficult. I was thinking, 'Oh shit, how am I going to do this?' I had to break it down song by song. The only way to work out how to film it was hard work and homework – weeks and weeks of fiddling around."

Asked about the difficulties of playing in such a spectacle, Alomar



Bowie conceived 1987's *Glass Spider* tour as a theatrical show of epic scale

jokes: "The biggest challenge was not getting hit by a damned dancer. There was so much choreography, and everyone had to hit their mark. All acts now have a million people on stage, and they're all following *Glass Spider*. The reviews at the time said: 'It's too dramatic, there's too many props.' But David was breaking new ground, and those critics hadn't criticised David when he was touring *Diamond Dogs*, walking on distorted Dali buildings. This was the same concept, just a higher level of success."

That higher level of success had become too much. After two middling albums, something had to give. Future Tin Machine guitarist Gabrels explains: "David told me that *Tonight* was him trying to give EMI what they wanted. He said: 'They gave me more money, so I felt obliged to honour them. I'd done my deal with the devil and it was time to pay up'. Why else would he do a Pepsi commercial with Tina Turner? In the 80s, David had the same audience as Tina Turner, Duran Duran and Phil Collins. That wasn't what David was really about and he lost his way. So much of the genesis of Tin Machine was David reacting to everything that happened after *Let's Dance* became so huge." And that really is a story for another time.

Loving The Alien (1983-1988) is released on 12 October ●

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LEAVE A GUIDING LIGHT ON

They've re-released classics, rarities and hitherto unheard masterpieces by some of the greatest musicians to have graced our stereos, and picked up Grammy nominations for their work. Without the boss' stint on student radio, however, they might never have existed. **Wyndham Wallace** meets the man who switched on Light In The Attic

Seated on a sofa in his Los Angeles office, Light In The Attic's Matt Sullivan is battling to talk over the noise of traffic when, suddenly, he leaps up and heads to the stereo. It's not, however, to put on one of the many LPs piled up around the room. Instead, he pulls a picture off the wall.

"I just framed this," he grins excitedly. "It's the cover of my high school Trapper Keeper," a brand of folder favoured through the 1980s by American high school students for their homework. "I wrote the names of my favourite bands: Yo La Tengo, Jane's Addiction… Look! Acetone's on here!"

Finding the name of a forgotten early 1990s Californian act might not seem exciting if it weren't that last autumn – 25 years after Acetone formed, and 16 after their bassist took his life, provoking the band's split – the label Sullivan founded in 2002 released a compilation, *Acetone 1992–2001*. The Verve's Richard Ashcroft, Spiritualized's Jason Pierce and Mazzy Star's Hope Sandoval endorsed the release with superlatives, while gushing reviews confirmed the validity of the enthusiasm that first led Sullivan to scribble the name on his binder.

Moreover, that 16-track collection – which also featured nine previously unreleased recordings – helped not only to revivify established fans of Acetone's cruelly curtailed career, but also brought the act to a new audience. This summer, the band's remaining members united – alongside two musicians with whom they've recently formed another project – to perform at London's Barbican, something unthinkable a year earlier. But this is what Light In The Attic specialise in: illuminating music's dark, neglected corners, reminding people about lost classics and encouraging them to re-evaluate overlooked gems.

It's been this way since their first endeavour, 2002's reissue of the first two, highly influential albums by The Last Poets, once dubbed "the village elders of the rap world" by *The New York Times*. Since then, the label's amassed a vast catalogue covering a range of genres, from – deep breath – Serge Gainsbourg's

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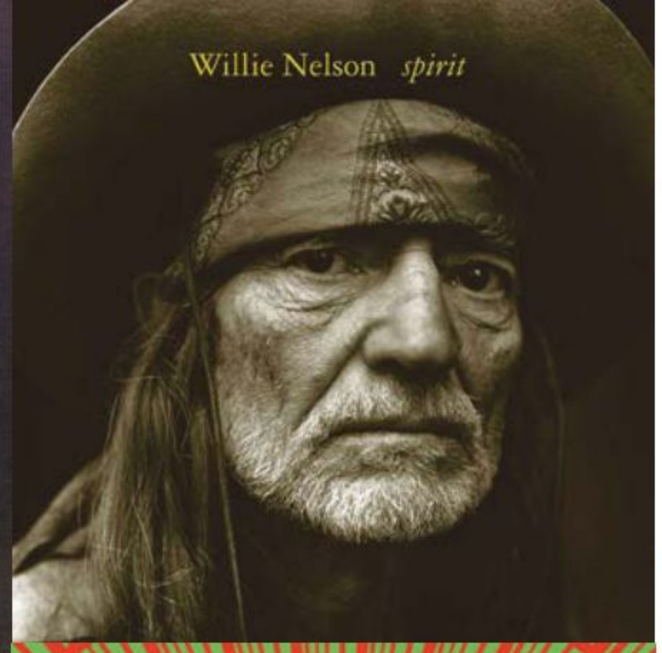
I'm Just Like You:
SLY'S STONE FLOWER
1969-70

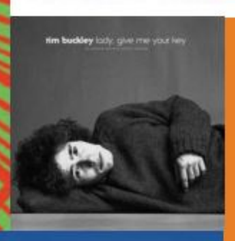

Willie Nelson spirit

ACETONE
1992-2001

TWO FROM THE VAULT
GRATEFUL DEAD

Built to Spill
Ultimate Alternative Wavers

THE BLACK ANGELS
DIRECTIONS TO SEE A GHOST


tim buckley lady, give me your key

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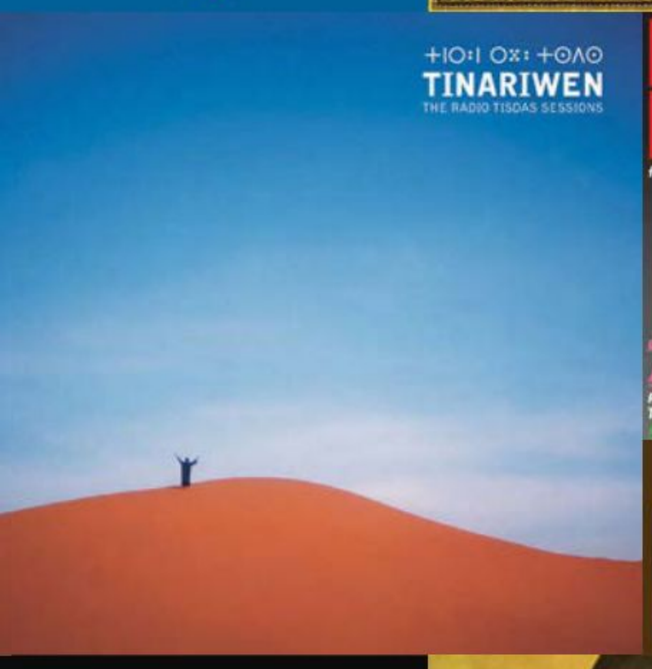
VOL ONE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KAREN DALTON
In My Own Time

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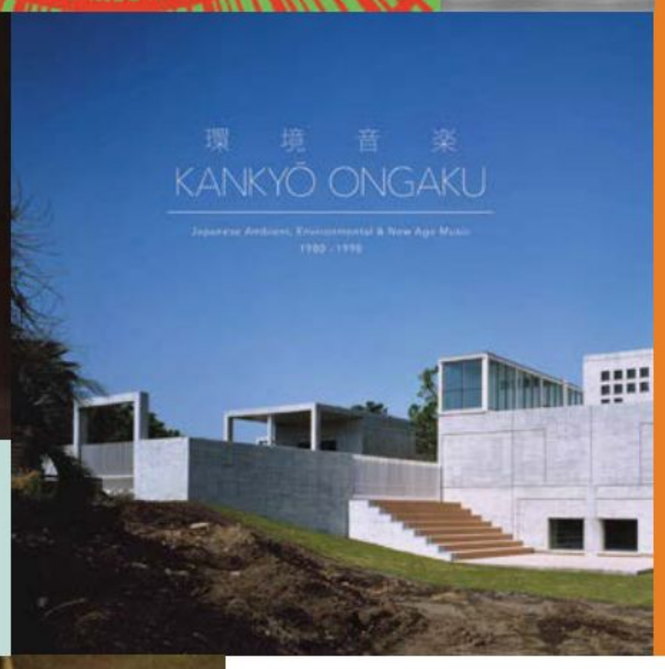
環境音楽
KANKYŌ ONGAKU
Japanese Ambient, Environmental & New Age Music
1980 - 1990

monks
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Françoise Hardy
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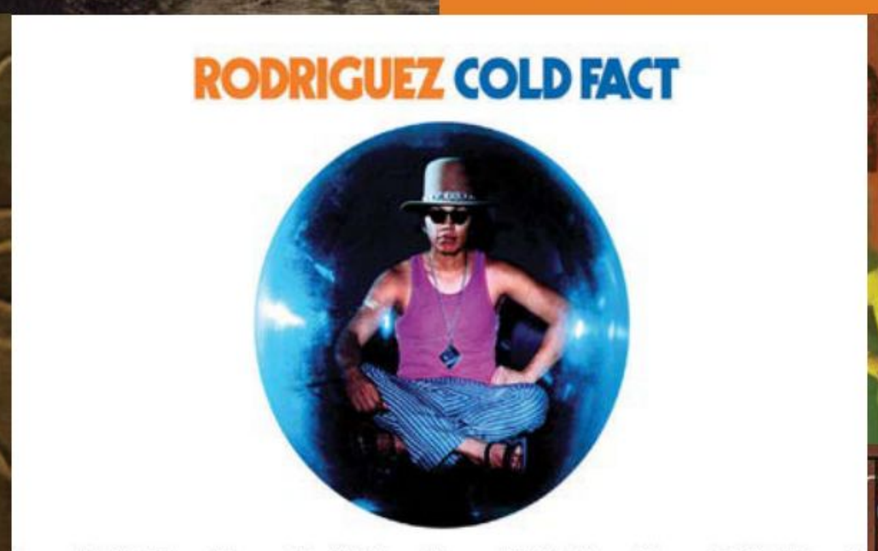
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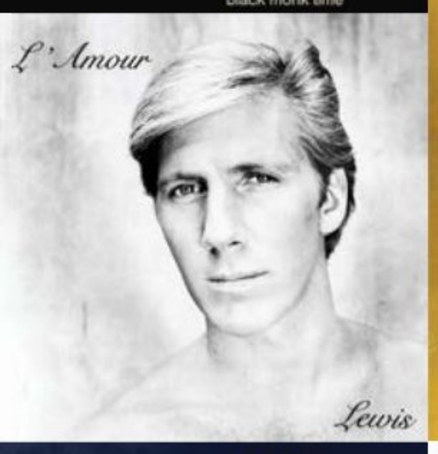
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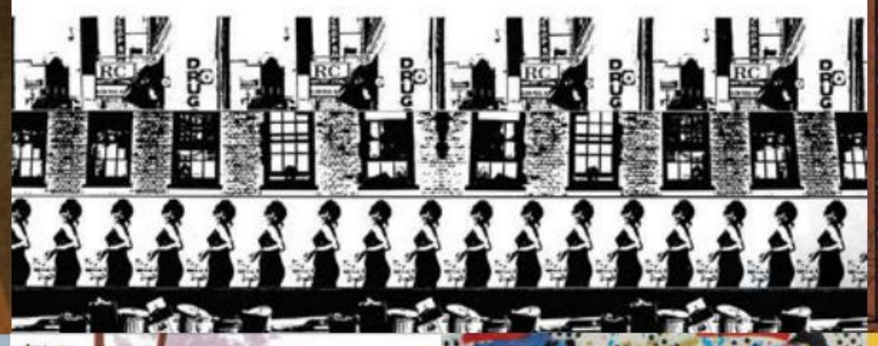

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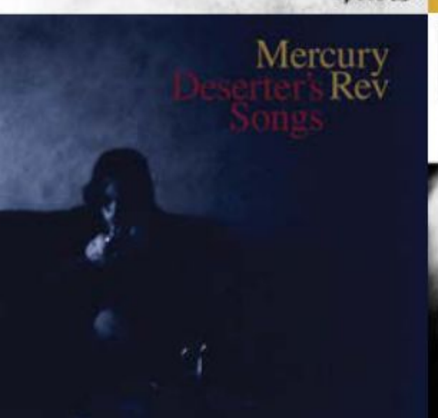
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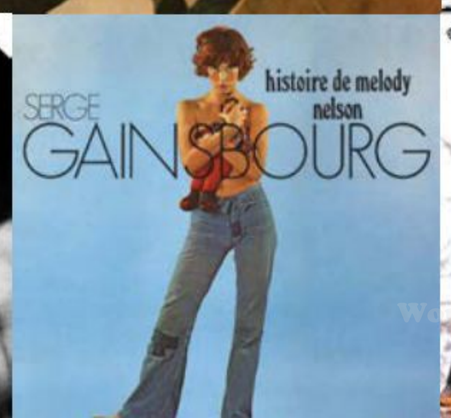
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Mine miNe MinD
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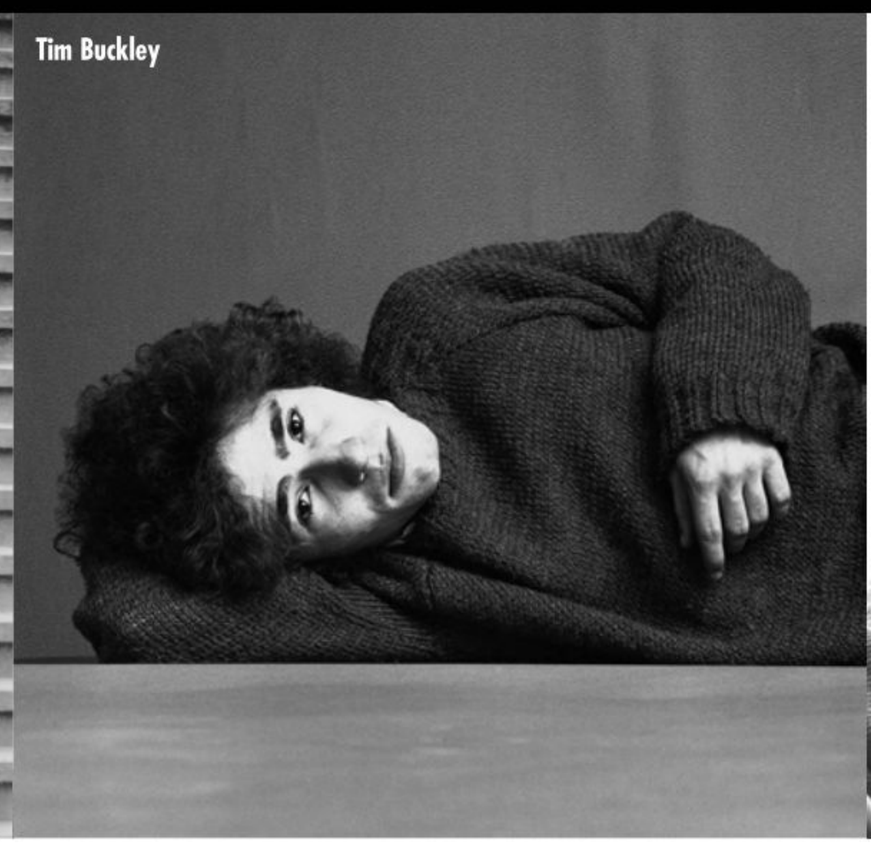
BLOODY HAMMER

Harry Hosono and The Yellow Magic Band
PARAISO

Rodriguez

The Monks


Tim Buckley

HOW TO TURN ON LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

"I've always been a sucker for the underdog," Sullivan says, asked to name the most exciting thing about his job. "It might be in sport, or life, but there's something about getting excited about something that was overlooked and giving it another chance. It's great when you start doing the research, and all these stories are uncovered. Forcing people to re-evaluate something is fun."

He points to *U.F.O.*, a privately pressed album released in 1969 by Jim Sullivan, who subsequently disappeared in 1975. The label, which reissued it in 2010, went as far as hiring private detectives to find out what happened after he left his car near Santa Rosa, New Mexico, but never uncovered the truth. Then there's Rodriguez's *Cold Fact*, which had previously remained almost entirely unheard outside South Africa and Australia. Boosted four years after its 2008 reissue by an Oscar-winning documentary, *Searching For Sugar Man*, it's become their biggest commercial success.

"I just hope to show people a different perspective," Sullivan states, "whether it's New Age music, which people laugh about because they didn't have the context to understand it, or Donnie & Joe Emerson's *Dreamin' Wild*, because it has a silly album cover. I want them to realise, 'there's beauty behind this thing'."

classic *Histoire De Melody Nelson* (1971) to funk hero Bernard Purdie's rare blaxploitation soundtrack, *Lialeh* (1974); from compilations of little-heard New Age recordings (2013's *I Am The Center: Private Issue New Age Music In America, 1950-1990*) to a slew of solo records by Haruomi Hosono, Ryuichi Sakamoto's Yellow Magic Orchestra colleague, and the wild avant-garage rock of The Monks' *Black Monk Time* (1966).

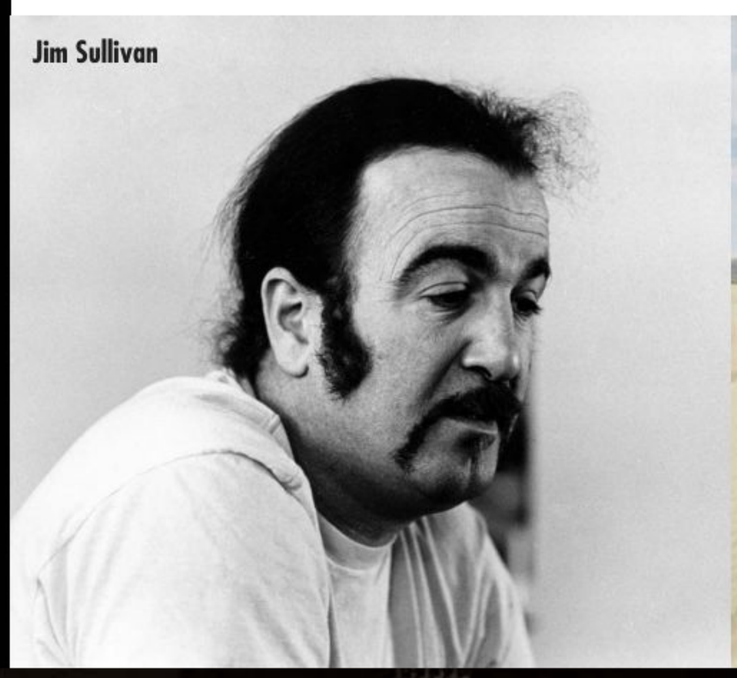
In the intervening years, they've distinguished themselves from other reissue specialists through their particular eye for detail. Their methods – presenting imaginatively designed, lovingly packaged, often unseen and unheard archive material alongside impeccable remasters – aren't exactly unconventional, but they're nonetheless often neglected by others who rush instead towards the budget market.

Their Grammy-nominated boxset, *There's A Dream I've Been Saving: Lee Hazlewood Industries 1966-1971*, even included a replica of one of the singer/songwriter/producer's plane tickets. It's no wonder, then, that the label boasts of records by numerous international legends, cult or otherwise, in their warehouse. Willie Nelson, Rodriguez, Bert Jansch, Françoise Hardy, Karen Dalton, Kris Kristofferson, Roky Erickson, Public Image Ltd., Sly Stone, D'Angelo, Mercury Rev and The Stone Roses have all, in one way or another, received the LITA stamp of approval on their sleeves.

EXPANDING HORIZONS

It was Sullivan's childhood friend, Josh Wright – who'd join the business a year after it started, and who continues to work from their Seattle office, home to their distribution, sales and accounting departments, as well as their record store – who first planted the seeds for the label. Back in 1993, he advocated the two buddies volunteer for their high school radio station in Bellevue, the Seattle suburb where they were growing up.

"No one listened!" Sullivan recalls, laughing. "It wasn't like one of those TV shows where it's on in all the hallways and everyone's like: 'Oh, you're a disc jockey!'. You'd see KASB – the call letters – on the door and were like: 'That's where all the weirdos go'. But, before I walked in that radio station, my tastes were a typical American, white suburban kid's: Led Zeppelin, NWA, Nirvana, Tom Petty, Guns N' Roses. It was like I got punched in the face


Jim Sullivan

Tinariwen

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Kris Kristofferson

Acetone

with the greatest punch in the world. Thank God for Josh, because I'd probably work in an insurance company now if it wasn't for that. And that's okay," he adds hurriedly, "but it wouldn't be fun for me!"

It helped that the station reported to CMJ, whose New Music Monthly chart helped shape student listening habits across the country. Sullivan built a network of contacts eager to supply CDs and tickets, broadening his tastes – something he continued to cultivate when he moved to college radio in Arizona. Meanwhile, he spent holidays interning at local labels such as Sub Pop and Loosegroove, which was co-founded by Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard and provided Queens Of The Stone Age's first home.

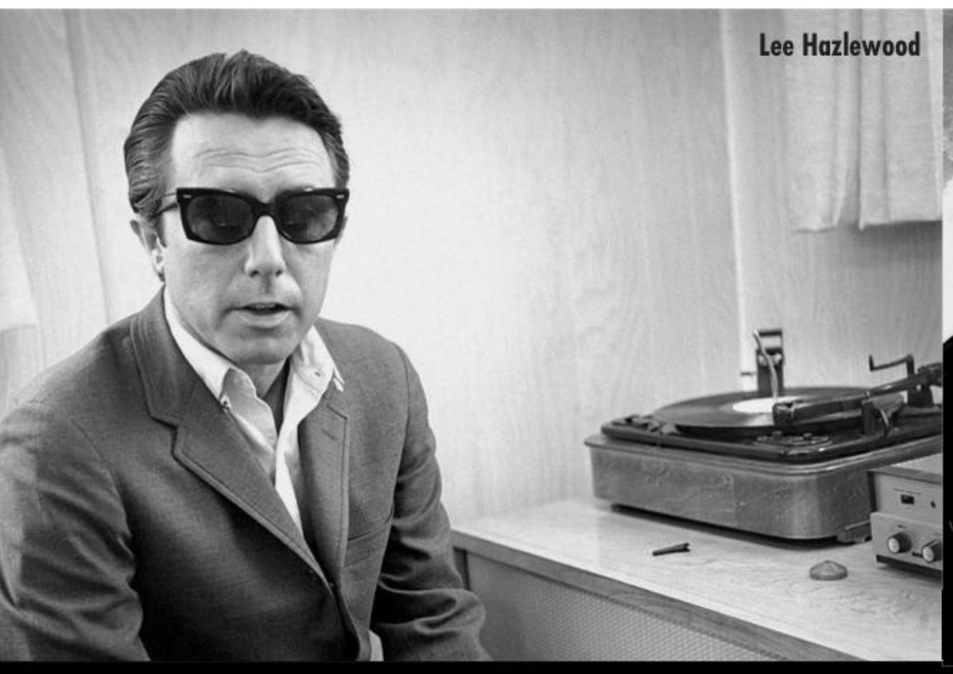
Sullivan's greatest eye-opener, however, came one summer, far from the grunge heartlands. "I did an internship in 1997 in Madrid with Munster Records and Vampisoul. That's how I got involved in reissues. I didn't know about The Monks and Spacemen 3 and Suicide and all these bands. That was another punch in the face," he smiles. "But a glorious punch in the face! Light In The Attic: A History Of Glorious Punches In The Face!"

UNCOMMONLY DETAILED

As it happens, LITA's website tells a tall tale of how Sullivan first came across Spain's favourite collectors' label when the car he was driving on holiday crashed into one belonging to Munster Records' owner, Iñigo Pastor. This, the 42-year-old admits, isn't true, but nonetheless highlights the label's fondness for elaborate stories, many of which form the basis of the uncommonly detailed liner notes Sullivan commissions. *I'm Just Like You: Sly's Stone Flower 1969-70* earned writer and archivist Alec Palao a 2014 Grammy nomination for his detailed rendering of the history of Sly Stone's short-lived label. *Rose Colored Corner*, a collection of

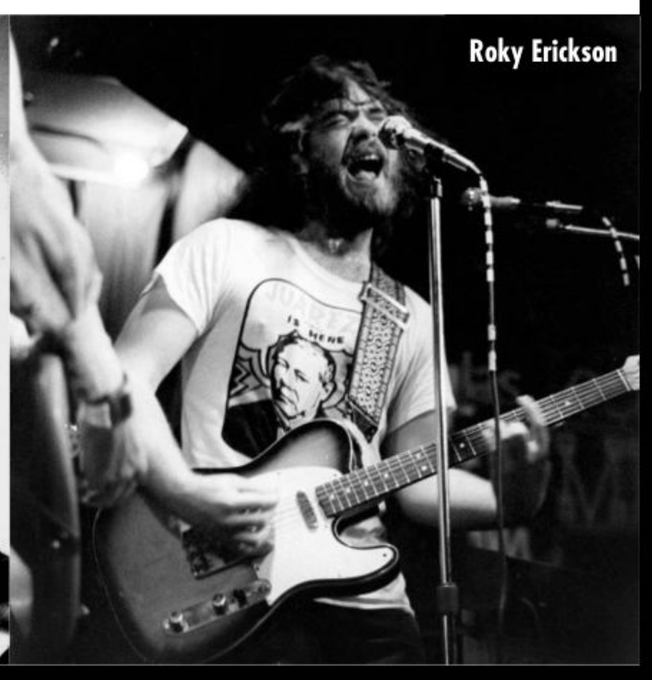
"THAT WAS ANOTHER PUNCH IN THE FACE. BUT A GLORIOUS PUNCH... 'LIGHT IN THE ATTIC: A HISTORY OF GLORIOUS PUNCHES IN THE FACE'!"

Karen Dalton



Lee Hazlewood

Mercury Rev



Roky Erickson

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Sly Stone

The Black Angels

"MOST OF THE PEOPLE WE ARE DEALING WITH HAD A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS. I DON'T WANT TO ADD TO THAT SHIT"

Lynn Castle's formerly unreleased demos for Jack Nitszche, recalls how she started her career as a hairdresser to the stars, prompting the release of her only single, *The Lady Barber*, recorded with Lee Hazlewood.

Furthermore, the record Sullivan calls the label's "crowning achievement" – 2014's *Native North America, Vol. 1: Aboriginal Folk, Rock, And Country 1966–1985* – picked up another Grammy nomination for Best Historical Album after gathering music barely heard outside the homes of its First Nations, Métis and Inuit creators.

That's not to mention the adventures surrounding the reissue of Lewis' lost 1983 masterpiece, *L'Amour*, released without the knowledge of an artist it took them another two years to track down. At an Oslo conference Q&A earlier this year, Sullivan spent half an hour chronicling these extensive efforts. Afterwards, he was approached by BBC DJ Stuart Maconie, who asked if he'd share the tale with his radio audience. "I didn't even finish," Sullivan protested. "I didn't get to the bit about the Mafia!"

Needless to say, the label – who'd carried out due diligence before proceeding with the release, speaking with friends, family and associates – assiduously protected the royalties it owed the artist, and delivered a cheque when they finally found him. Lewis politely rejected it, but, in similar circumstances, staff working for Sly Stone – who, alongside addiction issues, famously suffered such (still unresolved) financial difficulties during his career that by 2011 he was sleeping in his van – reacted rather differently. "His assistant came to collect the royalties," Sullivan recalls incredulously, "and said: 'I can't believe it! You guys are the only people that ever pay us.' I was like: 'Seriously?!'"

WE LOVE RECORD STORES

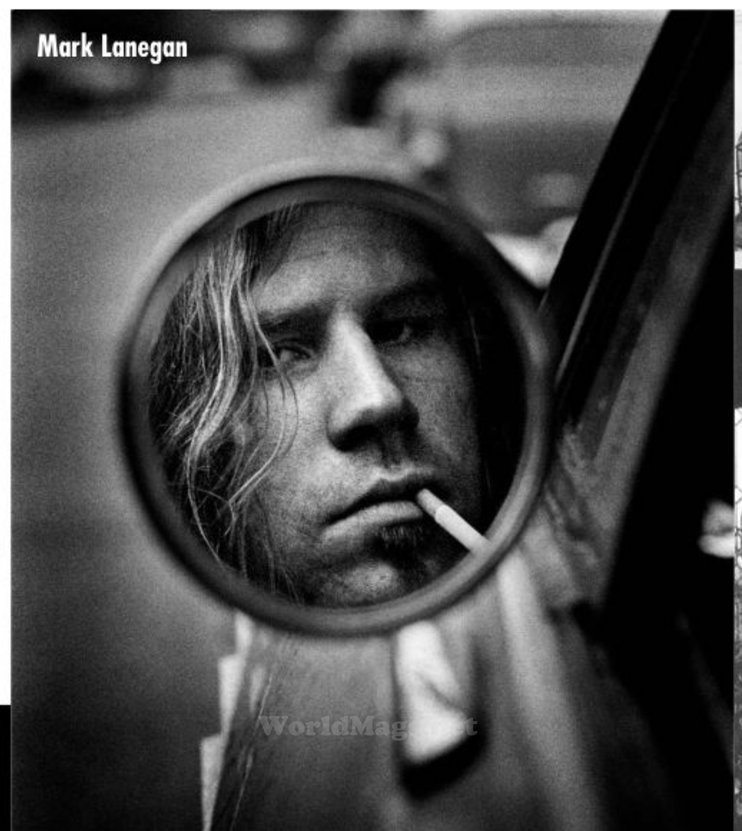
This, arguably, isn't the only old-fashioned side to the label, as demonstrated by their emphasis on physical product – though they're equally active online – and a hands-on approach to retail.

Sullivan declares proudly: "We love record stores – that's the heart and soul of Light In The Attic", and the company also distributes another 75 like-minded labels, carrying out regular road trips to shops across America with a van full of records, as well as publishing an old-school 'zine.

By developing this relationship with the indie community, they've earned an enviable reputation for taste as much as product. It's this which allows them to take a punt on unknowns such as Zuider Zee, whose raucous, unreleased early-70s recordings finally saw daylight this summer, or the extraordinarily beautiful, adventurously curated *Kankyo Ongaku: Japanese Ambient, Environmental & New Age Music 1980-1990*, due early next year.

Despite occasional exploits with contemporary acts such as The Black Angels, it's Light In The Attic's historical, inquiring, but never sententious, attitude that's central to their aesthetic. "I like to sleep well at night," Sullivan concludes, "and most of the people we're dealing with had a horrible experience in the music business. I don't want to add to that shit. I'd like to give back some positivity. If a record doesn't blossom into this thing that people get excited about outside of a small niche, at least that educational aspect of it exists. It's like an anthropological dig. It's been documented."

Perhaps that's what sets Light In The Attic apart: they not only make great records, but keep them as well. ●


Mark Lanegan

ZuiderZee

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PIAS ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BLACKEST RAINBOW SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • CODA MUSIC EDINBURGH • COOL DISC DERRY • CRASH LEEDS • CULT HERO BRIGHTON • DAVID'S LETCHWORTH • DIVERSE MUSIC NEWPORT • DRIFT TOTNES • EARWORM YORK • ECLIPSE WALSALL • ELEPHANT WINCHESTER • EMPIRE ST ALBANS • FIVES LEIGH ON SEA • FOREVER RECORDS NOTTINGHAM • FREEBIRD DUBLIN • FRIENDLY BRISTOL • GATEFIELD SOUNDS WHITSTABLE • HONEST JONS LONDON • JAM FALMOUTH • JUMBO LEEDS • LEFT FOR DEAD SHREWSBURY • LET IT ROLL CAMDEN • LEVEL CROSSING MORTLAKE • LOST IN VINYL CAMBRIDGE • MOLD RECORD SHOP MOLD • MONORAIL GLASGOW • NIGHTFLY RECORDS UXBRIDGE • NORMANS LEEDS • PEBBLE EASTBOURNE • PICCADILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA • VINYL REVOLUTION BRIGHTON • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD
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ARTHUR RUSSELL

CALLING OUT OF CONTEXT

Rough Trade

PIXIES

COME ON PILGRIM...IT'S SURFER ROSA

4AD

THE FALL

I AM KURIOUS ORANJ

Beggars Banquet

SOAP & SKIN

FROM GAS TO SOLID/YOU ARE MY FRIEND

Play It Again Sam

MOUNTAIN MAN

MAGIC SHIP

Bella Union

CROOKED MAN

CROOKED HOUSE

DFA

PENELOPE TRAPPES

PENELOPE TWO

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HALEY

PLEASURELAND

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THROBBING GRISTLE

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COVER STAR

DENNIS MORRIS

Dennis Morris was still at school when he first photographed Bob Marley, and those iconic shots propelled him on a journey from Sex Pistols chronicler to full-time art director at Island Records, as **Gary Tipp** discovers

During the mid-to-late 70s, the fiercely anti-authoritarian genres of punk and reggae were thrown together by way of their outsider status and rebel stance. The mutual love-in manifested itself in many ways. John Peel championed both movements and would typically play the latest punk 45 scorcher followed by a heavy dub cut. Don Letts turned the punks onto reggae via his DJ set at the Roxy, while Lee 'Scratch' Perry produced The Clash's third single, the explosive *Complete Control*. To seal the deal, Bob Marley would release the totemic *Punky Reggae Party* as a 12" single in 1977 as a follow-up to *Jammin'*.

With a foot in both the Sex Pistols' and Marley's camps, photographer, sleeve designer, A&R man and recording artist all wrapped up in one, Dennis Morris was the right man in the right place at the right time.

As he confirms when *Long Live Vinyl* catches up with him at PIAS HQ in Bermondsey: "Bob represented the new youth of Jamaica and the Pistols represented the new youth of England. I was fortunate enough to bridge both grounds. At the time, the only music that was saying anything politically or socially about the world around them was reggae and punk. It was a perfect fusion of both cultures."

MARLEY & ME

In love with photography from an early age, Morris first sold a shot to Fleet Street at the tender age of 11, but an encounter with Marley is when it all kicked off for him. "I knew he was coming over for his first tour of England [1973] and I decided I wanted to take some pictures. I bunked off school and went down to The Speakeasy Club on Margaret Street and waited.

"He eventually turned up with Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer. I walked up to Bob and asked to take his picture, and he invited me in to the soundcheck. During breaks, he asked me what it was like to be a young black kid in England and I asked him questions about Jamaica. We got on well. He told me about the tour and asked if I wanted to come along. Next morning, I packed my sports bag and I was ready to go."

The Wailers' first tour of the UK was an unmitigated disaster and the wheels soon came spinning off, as Morris recalls: "The tour was meant to be a couple of weeks, but about the third or fourth day it collapsed. Basically, it was winter and they hadn't come prepared. One morning, they woke up, wanted to play football, opened the curtain and it had

"THE ONLY MUSIC SAYING ANYTHING WAS REGGAE AND PUNK. IT WAS THE PERFECT FUSION OF BOTH CULTURES"

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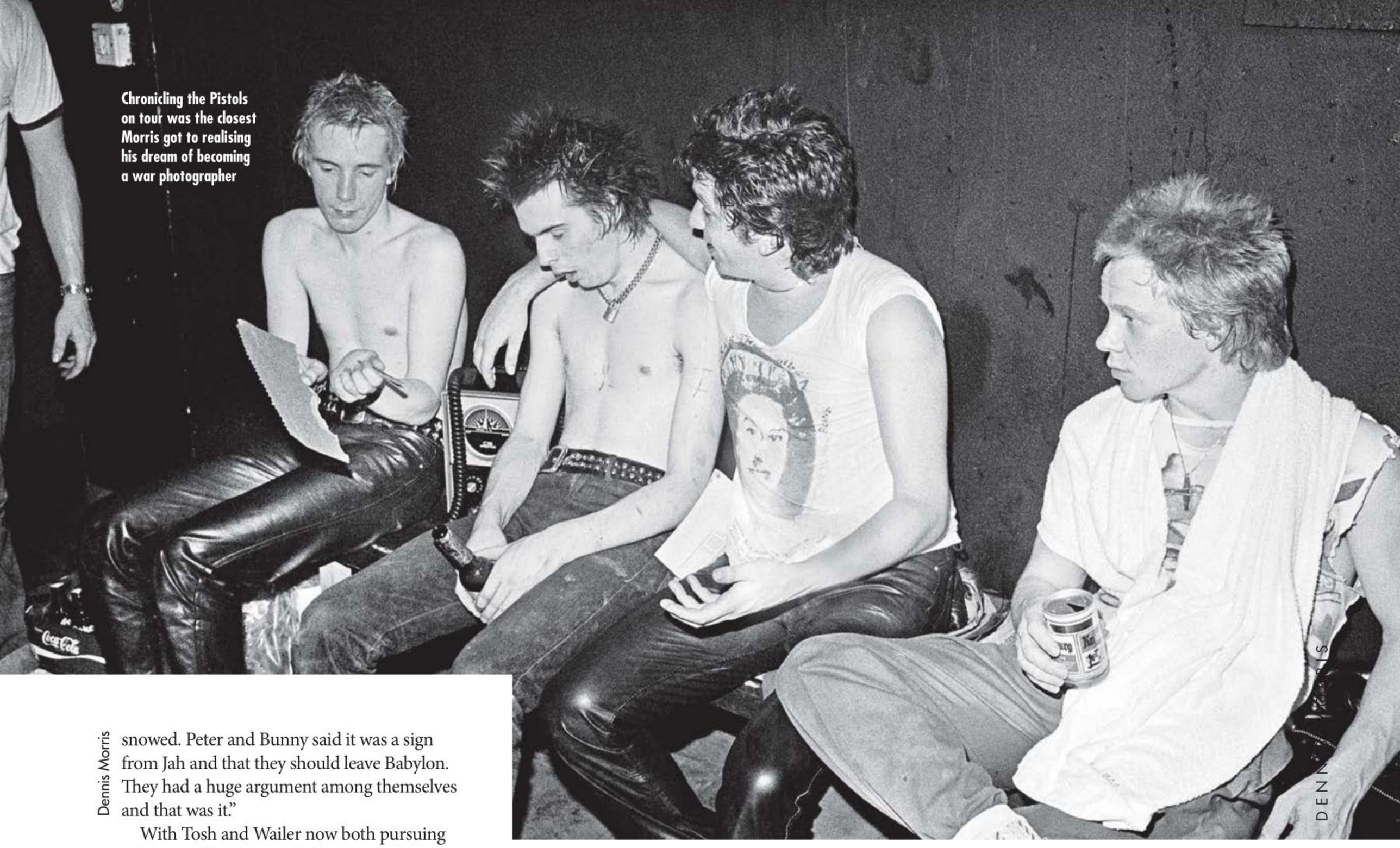

Chronicling the Pistols on tour was the closest Morris got to realising his dream of becoming a war photographer

Dennis Morris

snowed. Peter and Bunny said it was a sign from Jah and that they should leave Babylon. They had a huge argument among themselves and that was it."

With Tosh and Wailer now both pursuing solo careers back home in Jamaica and no longer part of the band, Marley returned to the UK in 1975 for a high-profile gig at the Lyceum. Never one to miss a trick, the enterprising Morris was on it in a flash.

"When I heard that gig was coming up I quickly got in touch with Island Records. They said, 'Bob remembers you' and I got a photo pass. There I was in the photo pit with all the top rock photographers and they looked at me like, 'who the hell is this?'. As I knew already how Bob performed, I had an advantage and positioned myself at the right side of the mic and I got the shots. It was one of my shots that they used for the cover of the live album. Because I was the only one who had shots of Bob prior to that show I got the cover of *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Time Out*."

WAR STORIES

A move into the music biz certainly wasn't a calculated one on Morris' part, as, in fact, his true ambition had always been to become a war photographer following in the shutter stops of his heroes Robert Capa, Don McCullin and Tim Page.

However, through the work he had done with Bob Marley, he was contacted by the Sex Pistols to see if he would do something similar with them, and in accepting the offer he was about to enter a war zone all of his own. As Morris recounts: "Tim Page used to photograph The Doors. He said that when Jim Morrison died he had to find another war. So he went to Vietnam. I found my war with Bob Marley and the Sex Pistols."

Morris explains the connection: "John (Lydon) was a big reggae fan and said he wanted to work with me because he saw those pictures of Bob, and one thing led to another. Funnily enough, John and I grew up in the same area as kids. He was in Finsbury Park, and I was in Hackney. He used to go to Hackney Technical College and we used to go to similar places, same blues parties."

You can rest assured there wasn't a brief given when chronicling the Sex Pistols, nothing was ever put down on paper, Morris was just left to his own devices. But it was a nasty time on the road with the fallout from the *God Save The Queen* single meaning the band were Public Enemy Number One.

"When John came out against the royal family it was really dangerous to be walking the streets. Not just Teddy Boys, but Joe Public as well. There was a lot of violence."

The pressures took their toll and the Pistols inevitably imploded on the band's 1978 US tour, with the final gig at the Winterland Ballroom a spectacularly messy and unsatisfying full stop on proceedings.

ON THE FRONT LINE

Around this time, a fresh adventure beckoned for Morris and due to his links to Marley and Jamaica, he was invited to the island on ▶

Morris was in the photo pit during Bob Marley's triumphant gig at the Lyceum in 1975

COVER STAR

Dennis Morris

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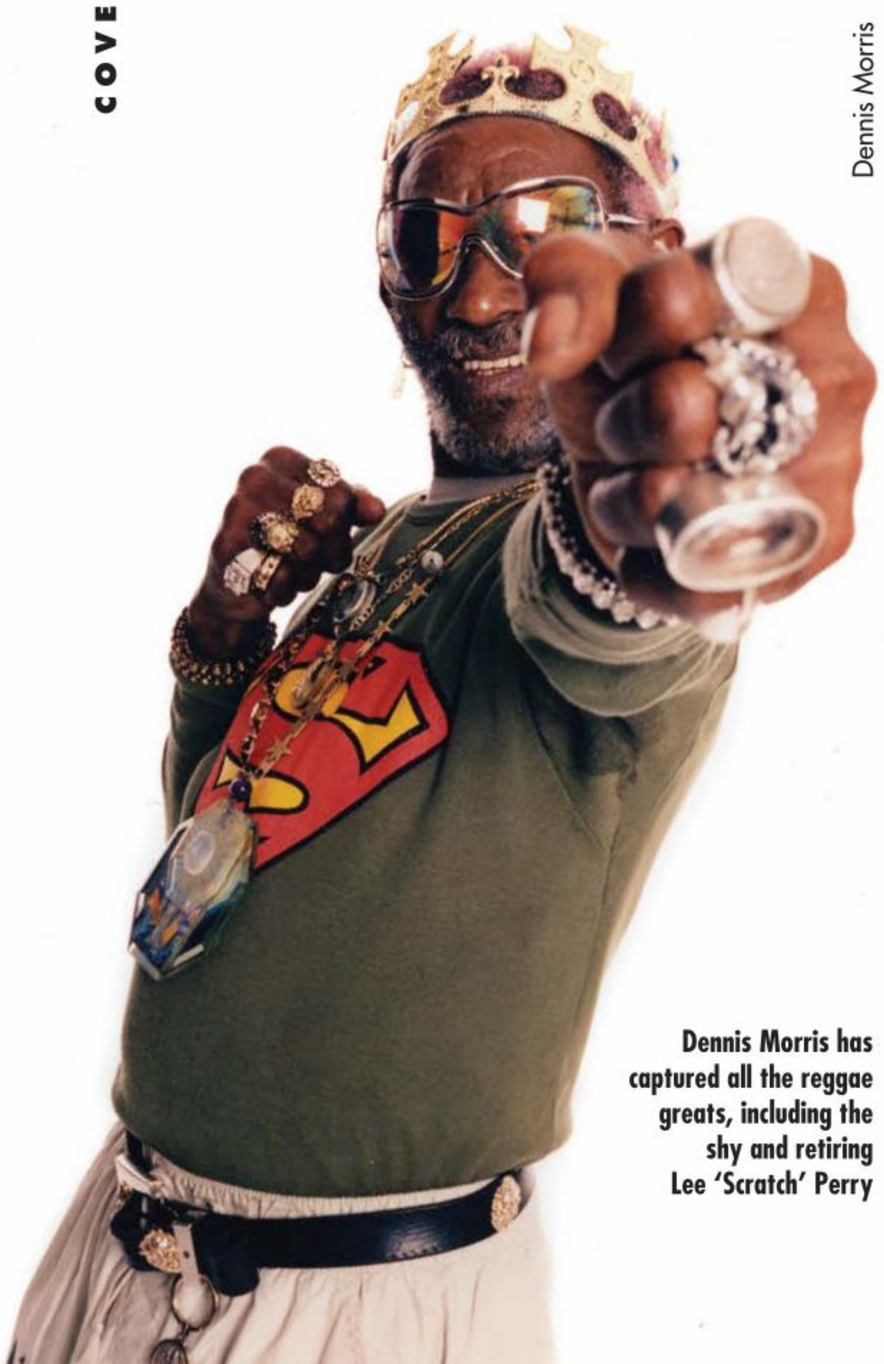
a talent-scouting trip at the behest of Virgin Records' head honcho Richard Branson. As he recalls: "Virgin wanted to get involved in reggae and they had no connection. At the time, Chris Blackwell at Island Records more or less had the reggae scene sewn up. I got a call for me to go with Richard to Jamaica to scout and sign as many acts as we could. I was then to take images for the album covers and press promotion.

"I told them I was really into it, and why don't we take John? He was a bit lost following the Pistols' split and so the three of us headed off. The first thing that happened was a group of rastas spotted John when we landed at Kingston airport and shouted: 'Johnny Rotten, mon! God Save The Queen.'"

The trip saw Virgin seriously expand its reggae roster for its Frontline imprint, with acts such as U-Roy, the Mighty Diamonds and Big Youth all signing on the dotted line.

While on their Caribbean sojourn, Morris accompanied Lydon to Lee 'Scratch' Perry's fabled Black Ark studio and it's there the vibes were deposited and brought out later while formulating the next move – PiL.

Morris was involved with the band from the outset. "I got to work on the band's visual identity using John's ideas and designed the aspirin-inspired logo. I suggested we break the band's name down to PiL, and the concept of the pill is so simple. You've seen it, you've taken it, you've swallowed it."



Dennis Morris

Dennis Morris has captured all the reggae greats, including the shy and retiring Lee 'Scratch' Perry

Dennis Morris

Basement 5 model the ski goggles and long johns look (Morris, far left)

Morris was responsible for the design of the newspaper sleeve for the *Public Image* single and the corporate stylisation of the first album's artwork, which was as big a departure away from the punk vibe as the band could manage. The iconic film canister sleeve for *Metal Box* was also a typically inspired and satisfyingly subversive Morris creation.

ISLAND HOPPING

It was around this time Morris got a call out of the blue from Island Records owner Chris Blackwell, who invited him in for a meeting. "He told me that one of the biggest mistakes he made was not getting the label involved with punk, because he felt it would never last. And he asked me to join Island Records as art director to transform the brand's visual image."

Morris was keen, but the one not insignificant stumbling block was that he really didn't like any of the bands on the label, as he explains: "Chris asked me, 'Who do you like?' and I told him Linton Kwesi Johnson and The Slits. So he offered me the role with an A&R capacity and I signed both of those artists to the label."

During this time, Morris oversaw the creation of any number of sleeves and ad campaigns for the record company, including his signing Linton Kwesi Johnson, but not The Slits ("they were a disaster to deal with").

"U2 SIGNED THE SAME TIME AS US. WE USED TO HEADLINE. ALWAYS BEWARE OF THE SUPPORT BAND"

Ultimately, Morris realised that the daily grind of corporate office life wasn't for him, specifically while a music project of his own was slowly percolating. "I wanted to use the things I'd learned along the way and form a band of my own. For me, it was a progression of my art. I wanted to create a new sound," says Morris. "I went to a ski shop and bought a whole lot of gear – goggles, gloves, long johns, and then I did a set of photos and showed them to Chris [Blackwell]. I told him they were called Basement 5 and they were going to be big."

The seed of suggestion bore fruit, but only after Morris had confessed that he was one of the band members concealed behind a pair of ski goggles, and they were duly signed to Island ("U2 signed the same time as us. We used to headline. Always beware of the support band!").

Martin Hannett, he of Joy Division fame, produced the debut album, but despite "being way ahead of the game in terms of sound", they were unable to cash in on good will alone and Basement 5 disbanded. The experience took its toll on Morris, who admits to the damage: "That band took me to the edge."

Morris eventually dusted himself down and pulled off a full-circle life move by returning to photography, his first and most enduring love. He is now a hugely respected snapper in the world of art photography with an impressive string of exhibitions spanning the globe behind him.

Not only that, but he also has the lasting legacy of the individual mark he made on UK pop culture with his singular design aesthetic and, of course, his peerless body of reportage work. Dennis Morris may never really have gone to war as a photographer, but there's still the smell of victory.

IN PRINT

For more information on a selection of Dennis Morris' photography books, go to www.artdata.co.uk

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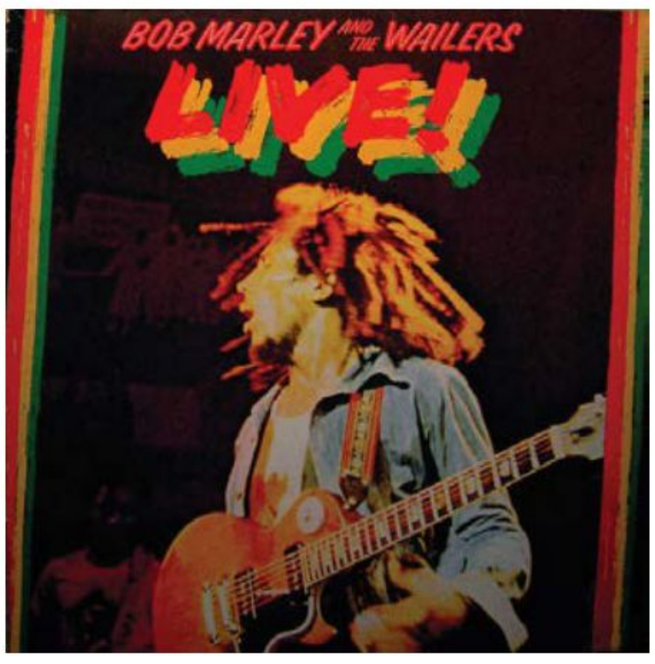
DENNIS MORRIS

PIL
METAL BOX
(1979)

"John (Lydon) told me he wanted to call the next album *Metal Box*. Something went 'ding' in my head as I remembered that opposite my old school in Hackney there was a factory called Metal Box. It turned out they made these film canisters, exactly the same size as vinyl. They gave me a price per unit and I went to see Virgin. The initial reaction was, 'Are you crazy?' but after looking at the quote, somehow it only worked out as a penny per sleeve more. If your canister is still in pristine condition then you've got a bootleg, as all of the originals will have gone rusty by now."

PIL
PUBLIC IMAGE
(1978)

"We were taking the mickey out of the newspapers with these weird, funny stories. I was constantly taking pictures of the band at the time. I had a shot of Jah Wobble with an axe, so we thought of some way of using it. John was still regularly making headlines, so we decided to do some tabloid type of nonsense. A silly parody. It was a conscious decision to get away from punk. The design used the same typefaces as the *Daily Mirror* and the same layouts. The beauty of it was it was the first time anything like that had been done in that format."



LIVE!
BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS
(1975)

"When I heard the gig was coming up, I got in touch with Island. They said: 'Bob remembers you' and I got a photo pass. There I was in the photo pit with all the top rock photographers and they looked at me like, 'who the hell is this?'. I knew already how Bob performed and so I got myself at the right side of the mic and I got the shots. The one thing I'll always remember about that gig is how hot it was in there. The venue was packed beyond belief. The intense body heat caused the condensation to drip off the ceiling of the Lyceum. It was just like it was raining."

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
BROKEN ENGLISH
(1979)

"I had just joined Island Records when Marianne was signed. I kept saying: 'I can do this' and was eventually given a go. I booked a studio I liked in Notting Hill. Marianne walked in and the first thing she said was: 'Do you know who I am? This could be the making of you'. Then she decided we must have a drink. We went to a nearby pub and at the top of her voice, she said: 'I'm not just some cheap fucking hooker, you know – this is going to cost you £200'. When we went back to the studio, all I had was a chair and two lights. Got it in one shot."

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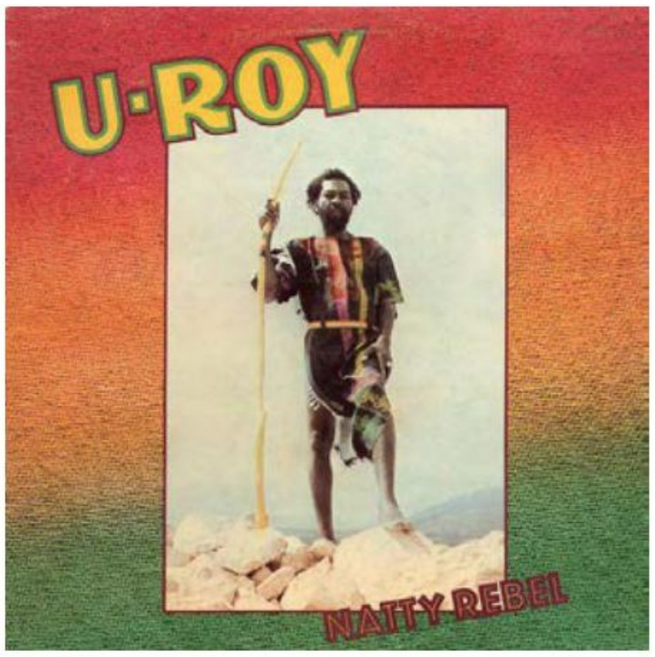
DENNIS MORRIS

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON
BASS CULTURE
(1980)

"I had an idea for an image and asked my secretary at the time to book me the earliest available flight to Berlin. I got there, came out of the airport, jumped into a cab and asked the driver to drive around for a bit. I saw a subway sign, asked the driver to stop, took a picture of it. I then got back in the cab, immediately drove straight back to the airport and then got on the next flight. When I got to the studio I made a print, cut it sharp and that was it."



U-ROY
NATTY REBEL
(1976)

"I made lots of trips over to Jamaica after the initial one with Richard Branson and John. Before I started taking their press photos, most of the reggae guys weren't interested in styling. So I used to buy clothes at Laurence Corner army surplus store and take them over. I gave reggae its visual image. I got to know U-Roy well. I bought the robes in the UK and took them over to Jamaica for him to wear. He was wary at first, but he got into it."

KIM FOWLEY
SNAKE DOCUMENT MASQUERADE
(1979)

"This cover is one of my masterstrokes. Island signed Kim Fowley round about the same time that video copies of *Deep Throat* first hit the scene. I paused the movie and took a shot of a blowjob from the TV screen, cropped it and then put the image on the cover but tilted at an angle. There it went, and it's in the racks. Until some clever sod at Woolworths picked it up, turned it round, and then the whole thing was pulled immediately."

BASEMENT 5
1965-1980
(1980)

"The title *1965-1980* related to a diary of my life growing up in Britain. I designed the band logo and used it on the cover. It's a reinterpretation of the Simon Says game, which I loved as a kid. Way better than the Rubik's Cube. The image signified an elaborate key that Basement 5 needed to use to get to the super bunker fallout shelter. The album was re-released by PIAS last year and there are now vinyl copies back out there." ●

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GENESIS

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

DECCA SKL 4990

The prog rockers recorded their debut album during the school holidays and its minimalistic sleeve meant it was often filed wrongly in record shops

WAX FACTS
Genesis
From Genesis To Revelation
Year **1969**
Format **Mono**
Label **Decca**

£1,500

After Genesis were discovered in 1967 while at Charterhouse school, *From Genesis To Revelation* was their debut album. It was released in March 1969 on Decca Records in the UK, and featured the original line-up of Peter Gabriel, Tony Banks, Mike Rutherford and Anthony Phillips.

At the request of their producer, Genesis composed a series of tracks that were based loosely on the bible, hence the title of the album. It was a grandiose statement for a young band, who recorded the album during their school holidays in 1968. Strings were later overdubbed on the record, which the band took umbrage with, but the gapless playback of the album and its adventurous concept led to it being almost completely different to anything else of its time.

From Genesis To Revelation was issued in a black sleeve with the title in gothic gold font on the top left-hand side. Due to the minimalistic nature of the sleeve, the album was often filed wrongly under religious music in record stores, making it almost impossible to find. Initial sales were a lowly 600 copies, of which roughly 150 were mono pressings. It didn't help matters that the band's name was omitted from the sleeve because Decca had recently discovered an obscure American act also called Genesis, and had asked the English band to change their name.

Thankfully, they never did, and would go on to have great success despite the slow start of their debut. Due to its poor sales, it has become an incredibly sought-after rarity, with mint-condition copies of the mono pressing selling for up to £1,500. ***Glen Bushell***

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Classic Album

PRIMAL SCREAM

SCREAMADELICA

Tired of being seen as indie also-rans, Primal Scream embraced club culture, fused rock and rave and rewrote the rock 'n' roll rulebook, establishing themselves as a band with style and a whole lot of substance…

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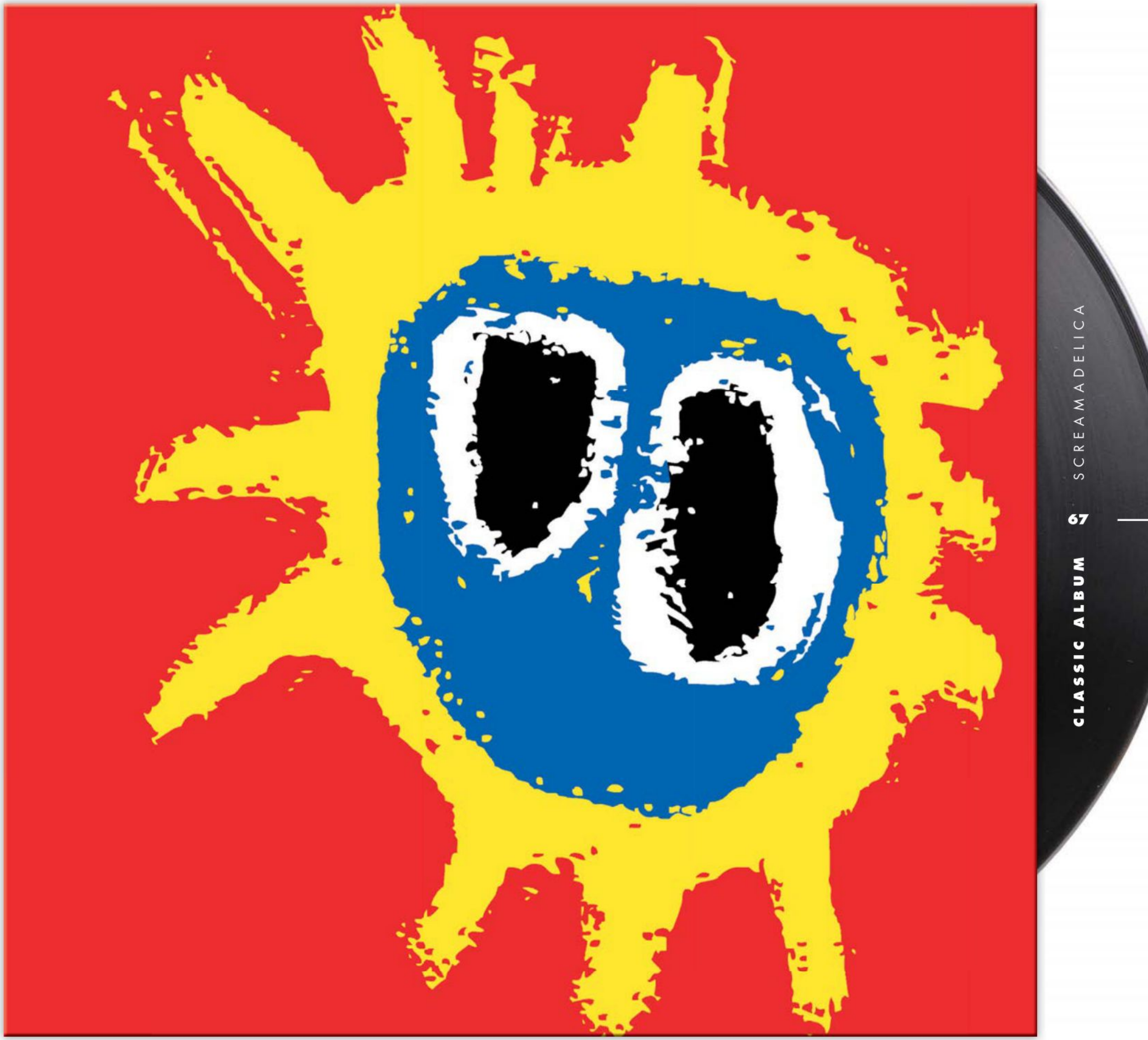

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The late 80s were a bleak and frustrating time for Primal Scream. Their self-titled second LP had been a disappointment; feeling that they lacked direction, Creation boss Alan McGee booked them on a tour of "any shithole that would have them". Jokingly dubbed the 'Tear Up The Atlas' tour, the jaunt saw them play tiny venues in far-flung corners of the UK – but crucially, during the tour, the band met DJ Andrew Weatherall.

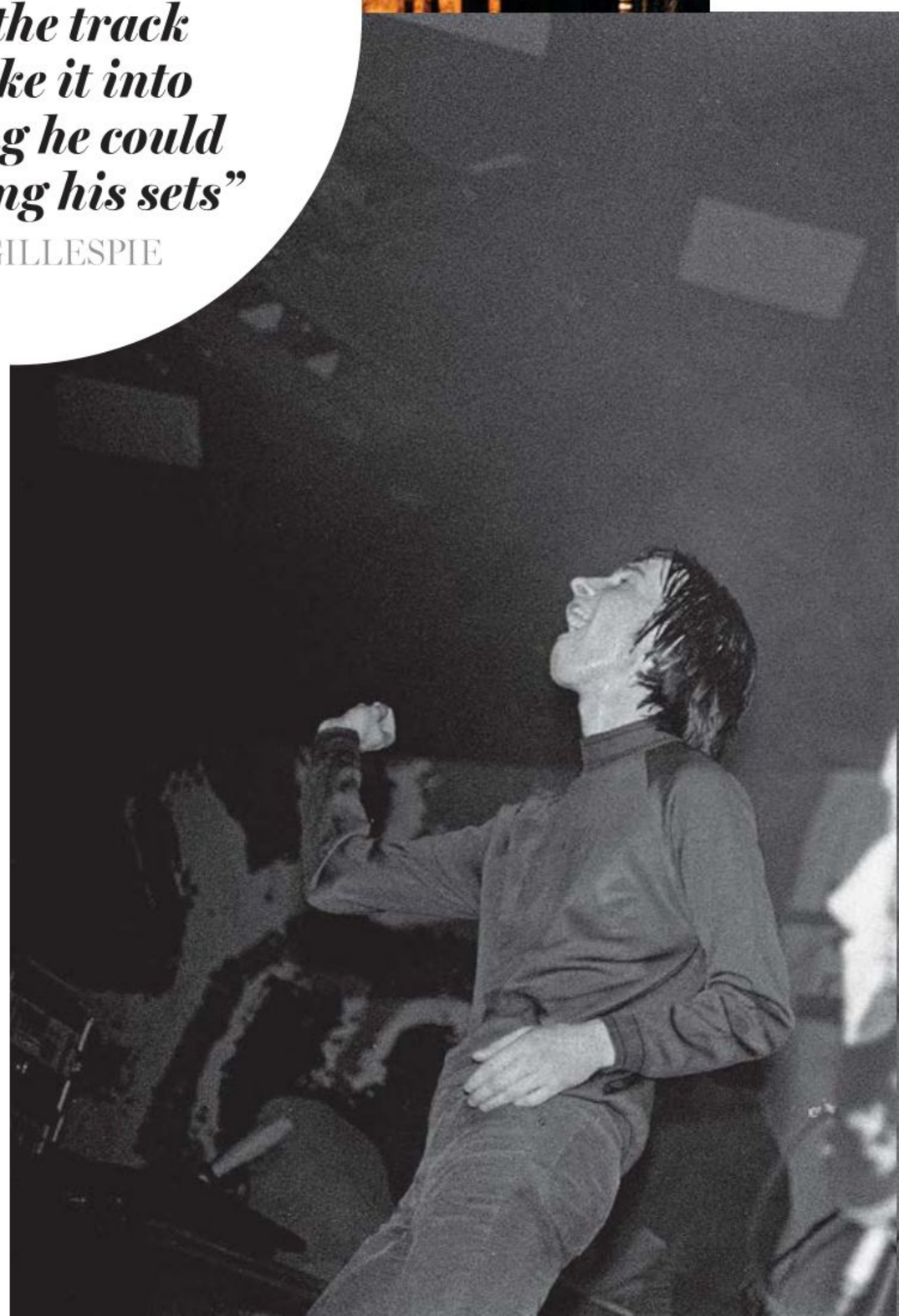
"I didn't know much about them, I only knew the odd track," Weatherall recalled. "I'd been asked by Helen Maud, the live editor of the *NME*, to review one of their gigs and thought they were great, so I gave them a rave review. We met again a couple of weeks later in Heaven, and I got to know them and they asked if I wanted to have a go at remixing one of their tracks."

Although Weatherall was a successful and influential club DJ, he admits that he was daunted at the prospect. "I'd only been in the studio a couple of times and was a bit hesitant at first," he said. "I knew what I wanted to do with *I'm Losing More Than I'll Ever Have*, but I didn't want to offend them by stripping away the vocal and stuff. So I did a version and thought it was okay, but when I played it for them they looked disappointed and said: 'We wanted it more screwed up than that. Do what you like. Don't worry about us.' So I went back and did what became *Loaded*."

"I loved what he had done with it," Gillespie told Absolute Radio in 2011. "I was blown away. I'd grown up with the disco extended 12" mixes and I loved dub versions where Scientist or Errol T or King Tubby would take the vocal

"Loaded was a dub version of our song. We wanted Andy to take the track and make it into something he could play during his sets"

BOBBY GILLESPIE



Getty

Above (l to r): Robert Young, Andrew Innes and Bobby Gillespie, who penned all but one track on *Screamadelica*

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reggae track and strip it back, or make it instrumental and add odd noises and samples, and to me, that's what *Loaded* was. It was a dub version of our song. We wanted Andy to take the track and make it into something he could play during his sets. It was an experiment and I loved the result."

SLIP INSIDE THIS HOUSE CLUB

The following weekend, Weatherall dropped *Loaded* during his set at London's Subterranea to a rapturous reception. Until now, the band had been known for punky garage rock influenced by The Stooges, New York Dolls and the MC5, but having been introduced by Alan McGee to the pills and thrills associated with a Happy Mondays gig, ecstasy and acid house, Gillespie's musical horizons were expanded.

"At first, I wasn't really into the music, but I did like the drug," he said. "I was living in Brighton at the time, and Alan McGee moved into the flat above me and he had a lot of parties, so he wore me down with the music – import 12" singles by the likes of Frankie Knuckles, and *Voodoo Ray* by A Guy Called Gerald. My girlfriend was really into it, so I started going out on the acid-house scene and it became really exciting – way more exciting than rock gigs."

Having scored their first Top 20 hit with *Loaded*, a follow-up was required. Set on capturing the rush and euphoria of acid house on record, the new altered-state Primal Scream holed up in a studio in Hackney to indulge themselves in a period of experimentation void of rules and boundaries. Writing on keyboards instead of guitars and using an S1000

Bobby Gillespie and Robert Young playing Glasgow's Barrowlands

Getty

The songs

Personnel

Bobby Gillespie vocals
Andrew Innes guitars
Robert Young guitar, vocals
Martin Duffy keys, piano
Henry Olsen bass, guitar
Jah Wobble bass
Phillip Tomanov drums, percussion
Denise Johnson vocals
Jimmy Miller, The Orb, Hypnotone, Andrew Weatherall, Hugo Nicolson, Terry Farley production

1 *MOVIN' ON UP*

Beginning life as a bare piano and vocal ballad inspired by blues and gospel, *Movin' On Up* grew into a Rolling Stones-inspired anthem. The catalyst, a Bo Diddley intro riff from Andrew Innes, led the band to add guitars and a choir on the chorus, as they felt Gillespie's voice was too soft to convey the song's uplifting message. The song gave the band the chance to work with producer Jimmy Miller and was released as the final *Screamadelica* single as the lead track on the *Dixie-Narco* EP in 1992 (No. 11 in the UK).

2 *SLIP INSIDE THIS HOUSE*

The only song on *Screamadelica* not written by the band, *Slip Inside This House* is a cover of a song by 60s psyche purveyors The 13th Floor Elevators. On the day of recording, a worse-for-wear Bobby was unable to sing it, so guitarist Robert Young stepped up instead.

3 *DON'T FIGHT IT, FEEL IT*

One of the most straightforward club songs on the LP, and the biggest crossover onto the dance scene, was inspired by The Ronettes and Phil Spector's Wall Of Sound. The band enlisted Denise Johnson to contribute the soulful vocal. Bobby has described the song as "Andrew Weatherall's masterpiece", claiming "it is the sound of rushing on ecstasy".

4 *HIGHER THAN THE SUN*

Described by Creation boss Alan McGee as "a genius hymn to drugs" and by Bobby Gillespie as "the most important record since *Anarchy In The UK*", this epic, sprawling piece was inspired by The Orb's *Little Fluffy Clouds*. Alex Paterson describes it as "the best thing I've ever done". Although the song originally clocked in at almost seven minutes long, Andrew Weatherall decided that an edit should be included on the album to work better with the sequencing, as it was followed by another mellow track, *Inner Flight*.

5 *INNER FLIGHT*

Eschewing the idea that just because a band had a drummer, a guitarist and a bassist all of those elements had to be on every song, *Inner Flight* was Primal Scream utilising the advances in technology, in this case the S1000 sampler. The band wanted a trippy, more synthetic sound and decided to use the sampler for the flute sound, a process which sound engineer Hugo Nicolson took days to perfect. The song ends with a sample of Brian Eno's *The Great Pretender*.

6 *COME TOGETHER*

The sound of summer 1990, *Come Together* encapsulates the peace, love and drugs of the rave generation. Written

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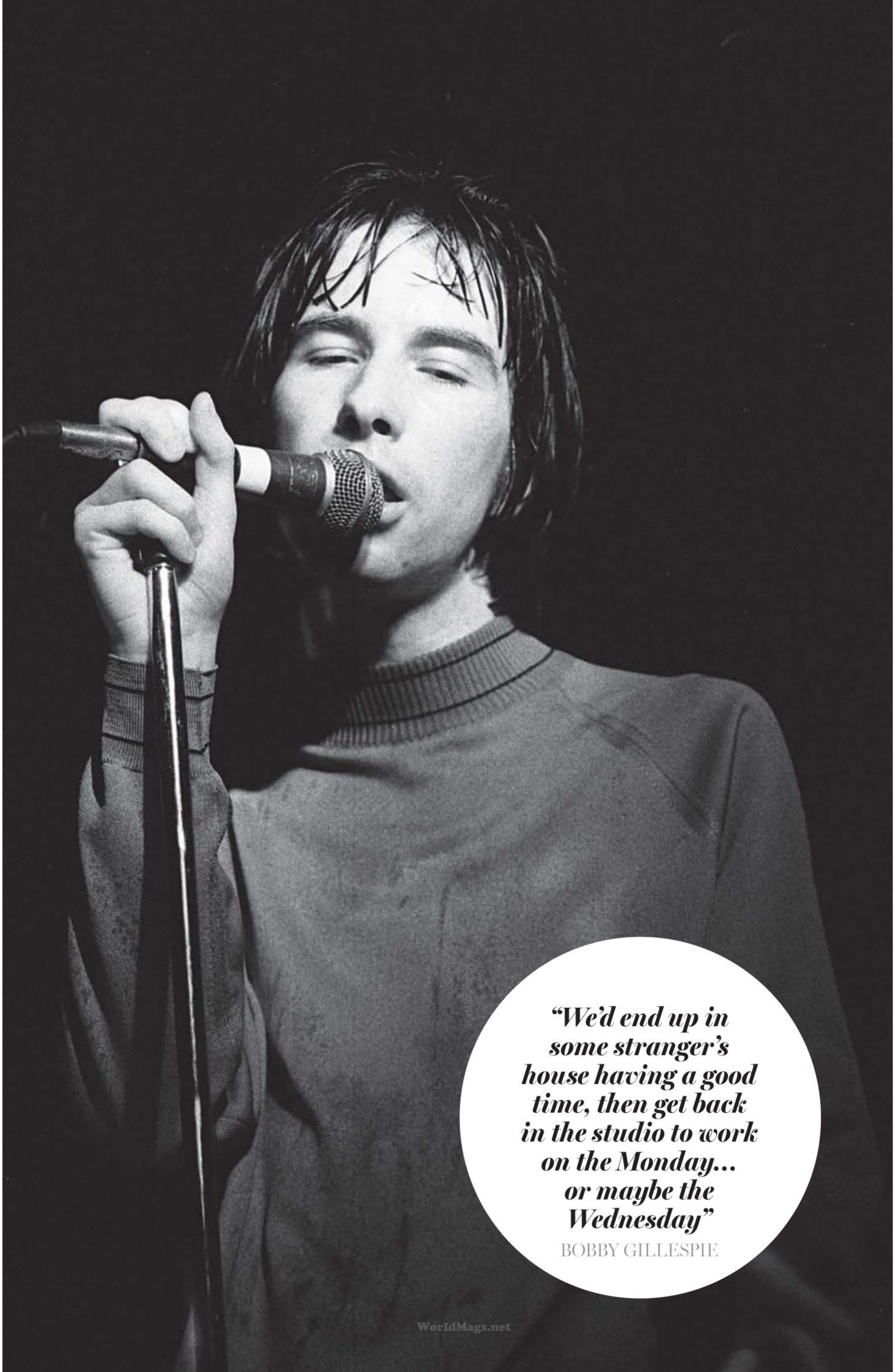

"We'd end up in some stranger's house having a good time, then get back in the studio to work on the Monday... or maybe the Wednesday"

BOBBY GILLESPIE

Getty

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sampler freed them from a traditional verse-chorus-verse song structure. The result was *Come Together* – the sound of summer 1990. "We never did ecstasy in the studio," Gillespie told the BBC's *Classic Albums* programme in 2011, "but the record came out of the experience of being involved in the acid scene and doing ecstasy. We'd find out where Andy was DJing, hire a car, and go off partying, listen to what was going on, end up in some stranger's house having a good time, then get back in the studio to work on the Monday… or maybe on the Wednesday!"

HIGHER THAN THE SUN

With weekenders often lasting four or five days, their partying was way more prevalent than their output, and McGee was forced to intervene to get the band to work on an actual LP, as opposed to an intermittent stream of singles.

Once the band established their focus, the album came together quickly. The unifying spirit of raves infiltrated the recording, resulting in jams with everyone working to produce the best record possible, and egos checked at the door. If someone wasn't available to play their part or someone thought they could do something better, it was encouraged (hence the lack of band credits). The only fixed roles were those of songwriters, with Gillespie, Innes and Young penning everything except *Slip Inside This House*.

Although critics heralded the production of Andrew Weatherall, Hugo Nicolson and Terry Farley, Weatherall has

Getty

Gillespie shows off his record collection, with Jimmy Cliff's *The Harder They Come* soundtrack taking pride of place, in 1990

The songs *continued*

after the band had been to clubs such as Shoom and Spectrum, the song, with its laid-back groove, samples of inspirational Jesse Jackson speeches, myriad sound effects and gospel refrain of "come together as one" was the sound of Primal Scream embracing the realisation that a song could be built solely around a riff or a vocal hook, and needn't follow any structure.

7 *LOADED*

A remix of *I'm Losing More Than I'll Ever Have* from the band's self-titled second album, *Loaded* was the first collaboration with Andrew Weatherall and the impetus for the acid-rock direction of *Screamadelica*. The infamous sample of Peter Fonda saying: "We want to be free… We want to get loaded" was taken from the dialogue of the 1966 film *The Wild Angels*. The song reached No. 16 in the charts, giving the band their first Top 20 hit.

8 *DAMAGED*

Although *Screamadelica* is lauded for its uplifting anthems, there's a lot of heart amongst the hedonism, and *Damaged* is the album's most tender moment. It was recorded live in one take, with the guitar solo added by Henry Olsen, and lyrics that dealt with the heartbreak of Bobby Gillespie and Andrew Innes, who had both recently endured break-ups from their long-term partners. The song was released as a Japanese-only single in August 1992.

9 *I'M COMIN' DOWN*

The joyful highs of *Loaded*, *Movin' On Up* and *Come Together* are countered by the despairing *I'm Comin' Down*, a song which wasn't played live until the 20th anniversary shows in 2011, as the band wanted their shows to have a positive, celebratory feel when the album was released in 1991. Gillespie says that the sadness in the record wasn't obvious to him until he revisited it clean and sober for the anniversary shows, when drummer Darrin Mooney – who joined after *Screamadelica* – pointed it out.

10 *HIGHER THAN THE SUN (A DUB SYMPHONY IN TWO PARTS)*

While the edited *Higher Than The Sun* was included as it worked better within the realms of the album's tracklisting, this remix, featuring Jah Wobble, was also added.

11 *SHINE LIKE STARS*

As soon as this song was recorded, the band knew that it would close the album. A gentle, almost lullaby-like track, *Shine Like Stars* heralds the party being over after all the debauchery that comes before it. The album is broadly sequenced to reflect a wild, lost weekend, taking the listener on a trip which included hope and expectation, love and euphoria, and melancholy at the inevitable comedown.

Getty

said that the songs are the album's core. "It gets on my nerves when people think it was all down to me. I played a very small part in it," he said. "They're great songwriters, and Bobby is a really good singer, so it wasn't like I wasn't presented with some brilliant material to work with. They wrote absolutely beautiful songs and if I hadn't done a good job with them, I wouldn't have had any right to be in a studio."

MOVIN' ON UP

Screamadelica was released on 23 September 1991 to a rapturous critical and commercial reception. As it had been preceded by four singles, it was expected to be a big hit for the band – but sales exceeded expectations and the album's initial print run of 60,000 copies sold out within days, forcing an emergency pressing to cope with demand. The album has re-entered the UK Top 100 several times over the years, peaking at No. 8 and spending 50 weeks there overall.

With a huge album to their name, and a string of era-defining singles under their belt, Primal Scream embraced the high life, appearing on *Top Of The Pops* and *The Word*, winning the inaugural Mercury Music Prize and infamously appearing on the cover of *Select* magazine alongside Kylie Minogue. The following year, they embarked on a tour which took debauchery to an entirely new level, with their own personal drug dealers part of the crew.

Wanting to capture the essence and energy of a rave in a gig setting, they toured with DJs supporting and played gigs that were all-nighters rather than the traditional rock gig. "We took drugs to get us on stage, more drugs during the gig and an aftershow wasn't an aftershow without drugs," Bobby said later. "The massive party that started with Alex of The Orb as the warm-up DJ would continue after we'd come off and dance with the crowd to Weatherall, and that would go on for ages."

"They wrote absolutely beautiful songs and if I hadn't done a good job with them, I wouldn't have had any right to be in a studio"

ANDY WEATHERALL

It wasn't until listening to the masters of *Screamadelica* in 2010 for a 20th Anniversary reissue that Gillespie noticed another facet to the album.

"I really felt the emotion in it," he said. "When we made it, it was a really pure thing. We thought we'd made an independent rock record that was always going to be cool, and I was happy with that. Then people went mad for it and it became this other thing. When we listened to the master tapes, we were like: 'Whoa.' They were great performances, and it's a really sincere, heartfelt, emotional record. I hadn't noticed the sadness in it before – we just made it and thought, "Yeah, it's a hedonistic record."

Having sold over three million copies worldwide, made frequent appearances on Greatest Albums Of All Time lists and even had Paul Cannell's iconic cover art immortalised on a stamp, *Screamadelica*'s classic status is affirmed.

"It made a big impact and people still come up to me and say how much it means to them or how it was the soundtrack to events in their lives. I still find that touching," Gillespie said. "That's what music is supposed to do. I'm incredibly proud of it." ●

(l to r): Bobby Gillespie, Henry Olsen, Robert Young, Phillip Tomanov and Andrew Innes at the *Screamadelica* launch party

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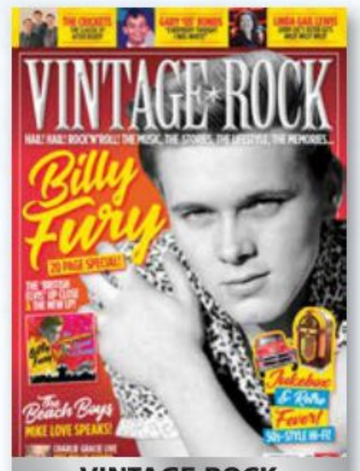

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THE ESSENTIAL

Queen

As flamboyant as they were musically diverse, the larger-than-life foursome filled stadiums across the globe and shifted millions of albums, not to mention singles, with their bombastic, mock-operatic, largely unclassifiable yet hugely accessible sound. There's no stopping **Sean Egan** now…

There was never another band quite like Queen. Plenty of groups have essayed rock, prog rock, opera, funk, pop and 20s pastiche – but not all on the same album. Just as no other band exhibited a facility with so many styles, no other band was made up of four members of equal songwriting ability.

Pianist and frontman Freddie Mercury (born Farrokh Bulsara), guitarist Brian May, bassist John Deacon and drummer Roger Taylor all wrote Queen hits. Meanwhile, if harmony singing layered to pack the punch of a musical instrument was something taken up successfully by others (notably ELO), Queen were its pioneers and masters.

Queen's lack of restraint or proportion means that they aren't to everyone's taste. Their corpus is both sublime and ridiculous, containing heartfelt pathos and effete affectation, great craftsmanship and doubtful taste – sometimes all in the space of one song.

They made some of the greatest popular music ever heard. *We Will Rock You*, *You're My Best Friend*, *Don't Stop Me Now* and *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* alone would have sealed a band's reputation, but on top of these and other classics, Queen were responsible for the unique and epoch-marking *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

So vast is their multi-generational fanbase that more than two decades after the death of Mercury, and even following the subsequent retirement of Deacon, Queen's brand name continues to be a big-bucks proposition.

Not only is *We Will Rock You*, a musical based on their songs, still packing them in, but in recent years they have successfully toured with guest vocalists. A much-awaited Freddie Mercury biopic will be with us any time now.

Here, we take a chronological look at the desirable vinyl product of an ensemble that – love 'em or hate 'em – were indisputably extraordinary. Rarest entries refer to UK releases, unless otherwise stated.

40 KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE/SON AND DAUGHTER (1973)

Queen's opening salvo to the world was a galloping Brian May composition, subsequently appearing as the opening track on their eponymous long-playing debut. Although *Keep Yourself Alive*'s anthemic, defiant chorus is undeniably glam-like, the track is otherwise straight-ahead progressive rock, right down to a brief but impressive drum solo.

Rarest 1973 EMI (South Africa) £220

39 QUEEN (1973)

The keynote song of Queen's first album was Mercury's *Great King Rat*, a medieval epic that demonstrated the young pretenders' unashamed kitchen-sink approach. Although too deep and discursive to be pop, the music on *Queen* is too agile to be guilty of the worst excesses of prog or heavy metal. It is, in other words, a new sound. The sound would be altered, refined and expanded down the years, but it would remain quintessentially Queen.

Rarest 1992 EMI (Czechoslovakia, green vinyl)

38 SEVEN SEAS OF RHYE/ SEE WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN
(1974)

Queen's first hit single arrived in early 1974 when the band secured a slot on *Top Of The Pops* after David Bowie bailed out of a scheduled appearance. This was despite the fact *Seven Seas Of Rhye* was not quite yet in the shops. Mercury had now developed the flimsy instrumental that closed the first album into a fully fledged song bursting with blood-and-thunder fantasy.

Rarest **1974 Elektra (New Zealand) £145**

36 KILLER QUEEN/ FLICK OF THE WRIST
(1974)

The hit side of this double-A release was tinged with 1930s crooning, but even the ultra-camp Noël Coward would have raised an eyebrow at this effete, fatuous creation. Yet the concoction works as enjoyably silly and baroque pop, partly because nobody ever recorded anything quite like it (nor would they want to). A transatlantic hit, it represented Queen's breakthrough.

Rarest **1975 EMI (Italy) £165**

34 BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY/I'M IN LOVE WITH MY CAR
(1975)

Bohemian Rhapsody topped the UK chart for nine weeks and cracked the then very conservative American Top 10. It's a unique, sprawling, blissful mixture of ballad, opera and hard rock containing multiple key, mood and style changes. Some, including at times Mercury, suggested it was meaningless, but in fact the song contains a clear, and heart-breaking, narrative thread.

Rarest **1995 EMI £210**

37 QUEEN II
(1974)

Despite Mick Rock's lavish cover design, the contents of *Queen II* were not much more impressive than the album's prosaic title. *Father To Son* is emblematic of the album's faults. Its straining, bland melody, flavourless harmonies, squalling guitars, overly sheened production and unnecessarily extended playing time render it dull. It demonstrates that for all the time and care lavished upon this album, it's actually a regression from the vitality and variety of its predecessor.

Rarest **1974 EMI (Denmark, gatefold sleeve)**

35 SHEER HEART ATTACK
(1974)

It might have seemed unwise for Queen to release a second album in 1974, but remarkably, it was their best effort yet. *Sheer Heart Attack* is also really the first proper Queen album, setting the pattern for the Queen-LP smörgåsbord of styles. On the first album on which all four Queen members contribute songs, hard rock – *Stone Cold Crazy* – sits cheek-by-jowl with epic surrealism – *She Makes Me (Stormtrooper In Stilettos)*.

Rarest **1987 EMI (Japan) £205**

33 A NIGHT AT THE OPERA
(1975)

At the time, the most expensive album ever made in a British studio, *A Night At The Opera* remains Queen's magnum opus. *Bohemian Rhapsody* was just the start of its eclecticism. *Lazing On A Sunday Afternoon* is more delightful granny music, *Love Of My Life* a heartbroken piano ballad, and Deacon's life-affirming *You're My Best Friend* the perfect pop song.

Rarest **2000 Hollywood (US, limited edition audiophile pressing) £175**

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32 YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND/'39
(1976)

It was claimed that Queen were unhappy about the release of a second single from *Opera*. Yet this piece of radio bliss consolidated their new fame with a transatlantic hit that demonstrated that they weren't all about bombast. Perhaps it was because of this that the band soon got over their moral qualms about what in those days was termed "ripping off the kids": they pioneered the practice in the UK of plundering albums for singles.

Rarest **1976 EMI (Spain) £50**

30 A DAY AT THE RACES
(1976)

The fact its title and design were both inversions of those of their last album, plus its lack of a *Bohemian Rhapsody*, caused some to dismiss this LP as "Beggar's Opera". Possibly, but it's also solid, varied and enjoyable. As well as *Somebody To Love*, it boasts the hard-riffing *Tie Your Mother Down*, 30s croon *The Millionaire Waltz*, the crunching lament for the fate of the Native American *White Man* and the oriental power ballad *Teo Torriatte (Let Us Cling Together)*.

Rarest **1996 Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab (US, limited numbered edition) £120**

28 WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS/WE WILL ROCK YOU
(1977)

In an arms-waving affair, Mercury declares he and his fans the winners, although doesn't ever quite state what the opposition constitutes. The song is indelibly wedded to its flip side, *We Will Rock You*. With its hypnotic title line, unceasing thundercrack percussion and army of handclaps, Queen had instantly created the live-participation number composer May intended.

Rarest **1977 EMI (Australia) £24**

31 SOMEBODY TO LOVE/WHITE MAN
(1976)

On the mid-tempo cry of romantic starvation on the A-side, the Queen mass harmonies never let up. Attached to Mercury's lead vocal from the get-go, they sometimes follow him, sometimes finish lines for him, sometimes foreshadow him and sometimes make arch asides to the listener. May throws in a suitably melodramatic guitar solo. The track is a great big piece of perfumed whimsy, but one few can find it in their heart to dislike.

Rarest **1976 EMI (Denmark) £90**

29 QUEEN'S FIRST E.P.
(1977)

Tie Your Mother Down was also released on single, but – unlike the US – Britain was not yet ready for the avaricious act of mining a third 45 from an album. Queen got around that in Spring 1977 with *Queen's First EP*, which made *Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy* a minor hit by placing it in front of *Death On Two Legs*, *Tenement Funster* and *White Queen*, all tracks from previous LPs. This peculiar Queen sampler made No. 17.

Rarest **1977 Elektra (Australia) £45**

27 NEWS OF THE WORLD
(1977)

With the punk wars raging, Queen found themselves in the critical firing line. On *News Of The World*, the harmonies are understated, running times mostly short and arrangements relatively basic. Although symbolically kept off the UK top spot by *Never Mind The Bollocks*, it was another fine effort. The rarest edition is a 40th anniversary pressing of 200-odd with exclusive artwork sold on one day at the MCM London Comic Con.

Rarest **2017 Virgin EMI (Marvel X-Men edition) £750**

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26 BICYCLE RACE/FAT BOTTOMED GIRLS
(1978)

May's brilliant, strutting boogie celebrating the fuller female fundament was quite a shock to hear blasting over decorous 1970s airwaves. Mercury's *Bicycle Race* is catchy but bizarre in its invocation of the simple childhood pleasure. Each song on this double A-sided single refers to the other, the consequence of the blinding flash of insight that fat bottoms are sometimes placed on bicycle seats.

Rarest **1978 EMI (Philippines) £70**

24 DON'T STOP ME NOW/ IN ONLY SEVEN DAYS
(1979)

In reaching No. 9 in the UK, *Jazz*'s second single, unusually for the time, actually did better than the lead 45. It's mainly because *Don't Stop Me Now* is an intoxicating, headlong brew of seamless melody, pumping piano, brittle drums and hurricane harmonies. It also boasts a soupçon of daring, with Mercury's lyric planting clues to his sexuality as he offers to make both men and women "supersonic".

Rarest **1979 EMI (Mexico) £60**

22 CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED LOVE/WE WILL ROCK YOU (LIVE)
(1979)

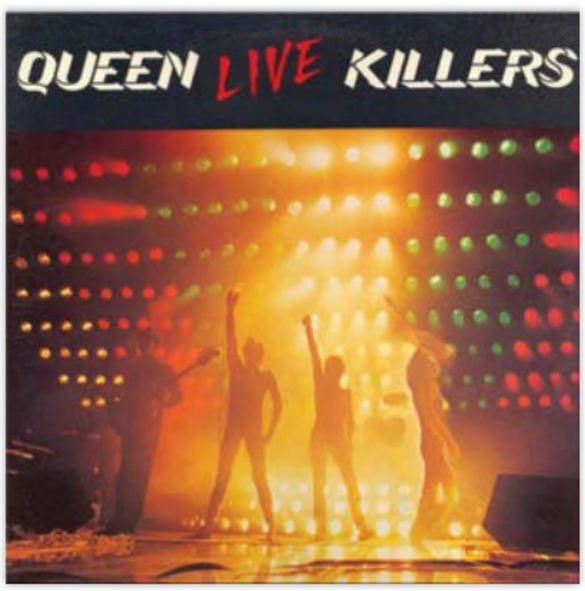
Queen go old-time rock 'n' roll. Mercury graces his song with a quavering Elvis-alike vocal and a chorus that descends to the bottom of the singer's socks. The fact the harmonies are a space age-variant of doo-wop underlines that the whole thing is pastiche, but it's so damnably likeable that one would have to be a real sourpuss to invoke purity.

Rarest **1980 EMI International (Bolivia) £115**

25 JAZZ
(1978)

Judging by the album's decadent New Orleans launch party, Queen quickly got over any sense of being chastened by punk. *Jazz*'s production is rather cold and hard, but as ever Queen proffer excellence and diversity, whether it be eerie exoticism in *Mustapha*, piano-dominated brooding in *Jealousy*, or acoustic balladry in *Leaving Home Ain't Easy*. *Rolling Stone*, though, weren't impressed, famously snarling: "Queen may be the first truly fascist rock band".

Rarest **1979 EMI (France, picture disc) £100**



23 LIVE KILLERS
(1979)

Mercury's showmanship acquired Queen a reputation as one of the world's best live acts. A double in-concert LP – a format *Frampton Comes Alive!* had recently made a viable proposition – therefore made perfect sense. Sadly, many Queen fans felt *Live Killers* a let-down, a poorly mixed selection of lacklustre *Jazz* tour performances. It also underlined how the multi-tracked intricacies of *Bohemian Rhapsody* defeated even Queen's live prowess.

Rarest **1979 Elektra (Japan, coloured disc) £30**

21 THE GAME
(1980)

Following the longest gap yet between studio albums came an LP that briefly made Queen the biggest band in the world. Mercury promoted it with a startling mucho-macho look. *The Game* sees Queen reining back on their smörgåsbord approach. It's spare, too: May's lovelorn *Sail Away Sweet Sister* is one of the few lush tracks. Yet it also frequently achieves excellence, particularly *Save Me*, which is elegantly dignified like no previous Queen fare.

Rarest **1995 Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab (USA, numbered limited edition on 200g vinyl) £65**

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20 ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST/ DRAGON ATTACK (1980)

For their critics, *The Game* saw Queen exceed even their own standards of avarice: this track was the album's fourth UK single. Deacon's lyric intriguingly equates the end of a relationship to slaughter, while his Chic-inspired bass riff is spellbinding. The overall result was a piece of funk so authentic that radio stations in the US assumed it to be the handiwork of a 'black' band.

Rarest 1980 EMI (Kenya) **£110**

18 FLASH GORDON (1980)

Without visuals, Queen's musical accompaniment to the cheesy *Star Wars* bandwagon jumper is a slight listen. Yet there is some quality material present. Deacon's *Arboria (Planet Of The Tree Men)* is haunting, and Mercury's sensual contributions to *The Kiss* constitute some of the best singing he ever recorded. The Turkish release, which happens to be the most prized, hedged all bets by plastering a picture of Queen over Mercury's minimalist cover design.

Rarest 1980 Max (Turkey) **£75**

16 UNDER PRESSURE/ SOUL BROTHER (1981)

With this collaboration with David Bowie, Queen engaged in the type of superstar team-up that is usually the preserve of anorak fantasy. *Under Pressure* wasn't quite the aesthetic triumph one might assume from such a pairing of giants. It has a memorable bass riff and an impressively imperial mien, but the lyric overreaches itself, straining for significance but floundering in banality.

Rarest 1981 EMI International (Bolivia) **£180**

19 FLASH/ FOOTBALL FIGHT (1980)

Poor old Brian Blessed. Though an acclaimed Shakespearian actor, thanks to this 45 he's best remembered for his hammy exclamation of "Gordon's alive!". Rumour has it, Queen constructed the soundtrack of *Flash Gordon* piecemeal, distracted by recording *The Game*. *Flash's Theme* (as it is titled on the soundtrack) is iconic only by virtue of its "Flash! Ah-aaah!" refrain.

Rarest 1980 EMI (Mexico) **£15**

17 GREATEST HITS (1981)

Queen's mélange approach could alienate as much as delight, but this collection seemed to please everybody: it's officially the biggest-selling UK album of all time. Though the non-chronological tracklisting differed from territory to territory, it constituted wall-to-wall hits and underlined the breathtaking sweep of Queen's talents. The release also arguably marked a demarcation point: some fans aver that, from this point on, Queen were never as good again.

Rarest 1981 Fálkinn (Iceland) **£40**

15 BODY LANGUAGE/ LIFE IS REAL (1982)

Mercury's *Body Language* is threaded with some notably fine bass work from Deacon, but that's the only thing this bare, anonymous funk has to recommend it. Although a No. 11 in the States, it achieved a shockingly low UK chart placing of 25. The failure of all the *Hot Space* singles, the arbitrarily thrown-in *Under Pressure* excepted, could be interpreted as punishment for the glut of releases from *The Game*.

Rarest 1982 EMI (South Africa) **£40**

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14 HOT SPACE

(1982)

Queen's long-standing No Synths policy was now history as they embraced modern funk with an absolutist fervour. The banks of artificial keys only compound the homogeneity created by Mercury singing lead on everything. The band can't rescue matters because their melodic skills and virtuoso musicianship are not called into service by such rhythm-oriented music. The summery Deacon/Mercury *Cool Cat* is one of the few highlights.

Rarest **1982 EMI (Argentina) £40**

13 RADIO GA GA/ I GO CRAZY

(1984)

By the mid 80s, videos were the tail wagging the music-industry dog. Roger Taylor's alternately lilting and thumping lament for the image-less sounds he grew up hearing on the humble ol' wireless is genuinely moving, if we leave aside the awkward fact that it was Queen who kicked off the video age with *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and helped cement it with this record's lavish handclap-rally promo.

Rarest **1984 EMI (Peru) £20**

12 THE WORKS

(1984)

Commercial failure put a swift end to Queen's radical new direction. After a shell-shocked calendar year off, Queen returned with an album cleaving to their classic template, even if also conforming to the prevailing fashions of metronomic drums and synth riffs – a 'Plastic Queen' sound that would prevail. In the annals of comebacks, *The Works* is one of the most remarkable. All four of its singles made the UK Top 20, three of them making the Top 10.

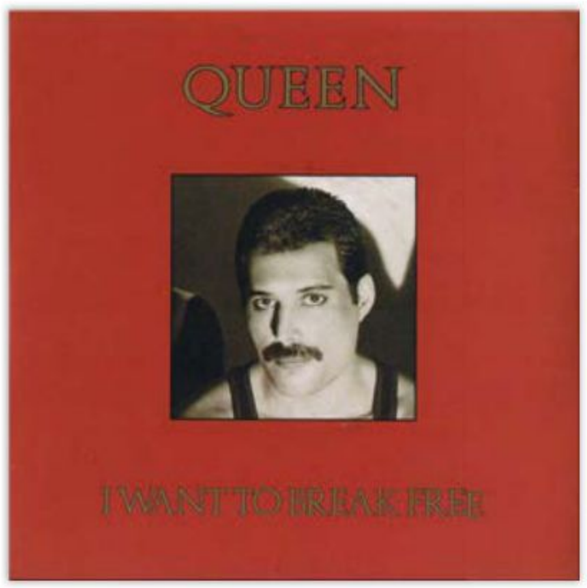
Rarest **1984 EMI (Uruguay) £50**

YOUR ACETATES AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT TRASH

When a pre-stardom Queen met a young Danny Baker

With their debut LP nearly ready for release, Queen decided to declare their genius to the world. Their chosen method was to take their album acetates to trendy West End record shop One Stop. Working behind the counter was a young Danny Baker.

In his memoir *Going To Sea In A Sieve*, Baker recalled one of the group announcing: "We want you to play our record in your shop. Constantly!" Manager John Gillespie put the record on the deck but after a minute of *Keep Yourself Alive* lifted the stylus. "Hate it," he said, dismissing them as Deep Purple soundalikes. Baker ventured the compliment they sounded like Stray. The group exploded in outrage at being compared to such minnows. Four-letter words flew back and forth before the group exited as dramatically as they'd arrived. They left behind not just their acetates but a carrier bag of promotional kimonos. The acetates were thrown in the bin when the store took receipt of the commercially released version of the album, while Baker recalls he wore the kimonos for a while before tearing them up for dusters.



11 I WANT TO BREAK FREE/MACHINES (OR 'BACK TO HUMANS')

(1984)

The album's second single was Deacon-devised synth pop that could have been British chart faves Depeche Mode or Yazoo. Its melody and key changes are pedestrian, but there's no denying the track's catchiness. As with the taster single, the video helped hugely the record's chart ascent – except in America, where the sight of Queen pouting in drag killed their career.

Rarest **1984 EMI International (Bolivia) £40**

10 THANK GOD IT'S CHRISTMAS (1984)

Overwhelmed with their recent success, Queen decided to issue this as a thanks to their fans. A May and Taylor co-write, it's reasonably affecting but too intense to have that singalong quality of a perennial Yuletide anthem. The record stalled just outside the UK Top 20. The most desired version is a 12" mispress which included the B-side tracks *Man On The Prowl* and *Keep Passing The Open Windows*.

Rarest **1984 EMI (Europe, 12", mispress) £45**

9 ONE VISION/ BLURRED VISION (1985)

This group-written single was recorded and released so soon after Queen's show-stealing performance at Live Aid that it was assumed to be a tribute to Bob Geldof rather than its real subject, Martin Luther King. The record is pretty confused as well. Its phased guitar riff, singalong chorus and "Whoa-whoa-ah!" vocal refrain are great stuff, but its compassion is sabotaged by an odd reference to fried chicken.

Rarest **1985 EMI (Uruguay) £140**

8 THE COMPLETE WORKS (1985)

A pre-CD boxset marked by real conscientiousness. Included was a tour itinerary booklet, a Queen world map and a magazine containing album artwork and a discography. The music consisted of Queen's entire catalogue up to that point. Each set was individually numbered. The price below is for unsigned copies: the 600 copies the band are reported to have autographed are the archetypal priceless artefacts.

Rarest **1985 EMI £160**

THE IVOR NOVELLO MYSTERY

Just how many Best Song awards did Queen win?

Reference books claim Queen, specifically Mercury, won two Ivor Novello Awards for Best Song. Gary Osborne, chair of the awards, however, reveals that the reference books are wrong.

Although *Killer Queen* was nominated for Best Popular Song in 1975, the accolade that year went to Carl Douglas for *Kung Fu Fighting*. The myth that Mercury won for *Bohemian Rhapsody* is more understandable. In light of the splendorous achievement of that record, it would have been absurd to give the award to anyone but Mercury. Sure enough, it went to... 10cc for *I'm Not In Love*. The awards committee's blushes were spared by the fact that they had no option but to give *Bohemian Rhapsody* the prize for 1975's Best Selling British Record. For the record, the other Ivor Novello awards Queen did win were Outstanding Contribution To British Music (1987), Best Selling A-Side (the re-released *Bohemian Rhapsody*, 1991), Best TV Commercial (May, 1991), International Hit Of The Year (Mercury, *Living On My Own*, 1993) and Outstanding Song Collection (2005).

7 A KIND OF MAGIC/ A DOZEN RED ROSES FOR MY DARLING (1986)

Almost all the songs on the *A Kind Of Magic* album appear in the movie *Highlander*. They comment on or are inspired by the action, but work perfectly well divorced from the cinema experience in exactly the way that the *Flash Gordon* soundtrack does not. For the finger-popping title track, Taylor uses a line uttered by Christopher Lambert's character Connor MacLeod.

Rarest **1986 EMI (Japan, 12-inch) £30**

6 A KIND OF MAGIC (1986)

Queen could have issued a proper *Highlander* soundtrack, but their incidental music remained exclusive to the film. These tracks are all real songs and constitute a good set, which consolidated the band's reinvigorating Live Aid triumph. After Mercury's death, *Who Wants To Live Forever* came to seem like an early message of despair, but it was written before the singer's HIV-positive diagnosis, and furthermore by May.

Rarest **1986 EMI (France, red vinyl) £140**

4 THE MIRACLE (1989)

After an unprecedented three-year gap, Queen returned with an album where fine craftsmanship was frequently ruined by cold shards of synthesiser and suffocating vocal mixes. Only Deacon's warm, busy bass remains unblemished by the keeping-up-with-the-Howard-Joneses approach. Highlights are the title track and the reflective *Was It All Worth It*. The fact there was no tour to promote *The Miracle* gives rise to the possibility that Mercury knew he was uninsurable.

Rarest **1990 HMV (India) £30**

2 LIVE AT WEMBLEY '86 (1992)

Live Magic (1986) was no more valuable a document of Queen's in-concert prowess than *Live Killers* had been, with the deficits this time revolving around savage editing. Ironically, the same year yielded recordings that made for a far better live album, even if it didn't get a release for six years. This double set captured the band in post-Live Aid euphoria on their final tour and contains hits, deep cuts and why-the-hell-nots such as *Big Spender*.

Rarest **1992 Parlophone £75**

5 I WANT IT ALL/ HANG ON IN THERE (1989)

To banish the grievances that festered when Taylor got disproportionately rich after his *I'm In Love With My Car* appeared on the B-side of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, there was now a collective Queen writing credit in existence. That May sings the respites here, though, reveals the main composer. His caterwauling HM guitar is another symptom of Queen's submission to the current musical trends.

Rarest **1989 EMI (South Africa) £10**

3 INNUENDO (1991)

An improvement. On *Innuendo*, drums are mixed mercifully lower and the classic Queen harmonies mixed higher, while there's a predominance of the organic in preference to the plastic. The mystical Led Zep-alike title track was a most unlikely No.1 when released as the lead-off single. *These Are The Days Of Our Lives* is Taylor's sweet elegy for a dying Mercury, while *The Show Must Go On* makes a fitting closer to the last Queen album of Freddie's lifetime.

Rarest **1991 Parlophone £40**

1 MADE IN HEAVEN (1995)

An AIDS-stricken Mercury passed away on 24 November, 1991. On *Made In Heaven*, Deacon, May and Taylor constructed an album around their deceased colleague's voice. The result is easily the best Queen album since *The Game*. Bizarrely, Mercury comes across as more alive than ever, a consequence of his unusually breathy singing technique. The album was a worldwide success, eclipsing sales for many previous Queen releases.

Rarest **1995 Parlophone (gatefold, limited edition) £145**

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CONCORDE MUSIC
PERTH

Long-term survival is all about staying ahead of the game and outlasting your competitors. A curious **Mark Alexander** visits the oldest independent, family-run record shop in Scotland to find out how it's done

The city of Perth has been home to Concorde Music for more than 50 years. In that time, fashions have come and gone, musical tastes have spread out like oil over water and society generally has changed beyond all recognition from that of the swinging 60s. Since it was opened in 1967, this family-run music shop has survived the rise and fall, and rise of vinyl, seen off larger high-street names and maintained a solid customer base, many of whom fondly remember buying their first record at the enduring shop.

"We get customers from all over Scotland," says Garry Smith, who owns the business with his wife Hazel. "There aren't many shops like this, so when people come to Perth, they pop in. Some will make a point of coming for the day because they know what we've got. We also see people once or twice a year, because they come to Perth on holiday."

In 2017, Concorde Music celebrated its 50th year. The achievement is dutifully recorded in a banner hung above the DVD section in the shop, which proudly features a spherical emblem marking the half-century milestone. Gloriously bold, the placard also informs visitors they have entered Scotland's oldest independent, family-run record shop.

"We weren't sure if we were the oldest," admits Craig Smith, Garry's son, who also works in the business, "but we found out the next oldest record shop was started in 1976, and that was also in Perth."

Perth is home to many Scottish firsts, including the country's first hotel, its oldest library and Scotland's oldest man. It would seem the Fair City of Perth has also been a hotbed of record sales north of the border with Concorde Music at its helm.

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

The shop was the brainchild of Garry's dad who, as a sales rep in the stationary industry, had an uncanny knack of knowing when to start up a record store.

The heady times during 1967 have been described as the greatest 12 months in rock and pop history, with the likes of The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix and The Beatles releasing seismic albums that would shape the musical landscape for generations. It was also the year Garry's mum and dad decided to take the plunge and buy out a lease on a Perth shop previously held by, among others, the accordion band leader Jimmy Shand.

The timing couldn't have been better. Pop culture had taken root and Garry couldn't wait to get stuck in. "I used to come down after school to help out," he remembers. "I thought it was good fun, so I left school in the fifth year and came into the business. As anyone will tell you, working for yourself isn't all it's cracked up to be, but at least working in this environment, you have a good product to work with. That's the added bonus, working with music."

MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Concorde Music has occupied its present site on Scott Street in the heart of Perth's city centre since the 1980s. It is surrounded by all the trappings of a downtown location, with restaurants,

> "WE WEREN'T EXACTLY SURE IF WE WERE THE OLDEST, BUT THEN WE FOUND OUT THAT THE NEXT OLDEST RECORD SHOP WAS STARTED IN 1976, AND THAT WAS ALSO IN PERTH"
>
> **GARRY SMITH, OWNER**

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takeaways and nightclubs for neighbours. It forms part of the daily commute for shoppers and office workers, and has enjoyed a prime location from which to observe the changing fortunes of Perth's commercial hub.

Over five decades, the business has also had front-row seats to witness the fickle world of pop culture, with sheet music, records, eight-track cartridges, cassettes and CDs all playing their part in the longevity of the outlet. Smith says learning to adapt has been the greatest lesson of all.

"From day one, we had a music department selling sheet music," he says. "But gradually sales went down, so we closed that department about five years ago. It wasn't worth the space it was taking up. At that time vinyl was coming back in, so we used that additional space for more records. Because it's your own business, you can move with the times easier than if you were a larger chain. It's about moving with the trends and not sitting back and complaining, which is easy to do. You've got to get on with it."

The shop has stocked vinyl on and off since its inception. Today, it is the cornerstone of its offering. The modern-day layout is ordered and comprehensive, with old and new stock vying for supremacy. Classical, jazz and traditional tastes are catered for alongside rock, folk and blues. Singles, 12"s and compilations get their own sections and there are a number of eye-catching displays tempting you to fish out a gem. Perhaps most interestingly of all, there is a series of well-stocked and well-positioned shelves filled with the latest releases from contemporary and established bands.

Like many of the UK's remaining record shops, Concorde Music is riding the vinyl-revival wave with passion and poise, although it should be noted the prominence of the latest titles isn't an impulse response to the recent upturn. The Smith family cracked that nut a long time ago.

"We had the new records in before we went for the old ones," explains Craig. "We started off with new records first and then moved onto second-hand. There are a lot of things you can't get on brand new vinyl but you can on second-hand, so we have a broad spectrum of music. We've been doing new releases for about five years and second-hand for about three."

The early decision to opt for new over old seems to have paid off and was certainly ahead of the curve, but the success of Concorde hasn't been simply about good timing. With a knack of remembering customers' names, Craig brings the notion of a personalised service to another level. His hospitality, alongside the greeting from his mother and the long-serving front-of-house aficionado Jane Ireland, means the Concorde team create a welcome akin to walking into your living room and slipping on a pair of comfy slippers. You feel at home.

He also has a good understanding of the business side of things and puts the ratio of old and new record sales at 25:75. "There is so much new stuff coming out on vinyl on a weekly basis; reissues and brand new stuff," he says, "it's always expanding."

PERFECT PAIRING

You can see where Craig gets his charm from, as his mother and father both have the same ability to put you at ease. The couple have been the linchpin in Concorde's remarkable run and a source of much intrigue. "A lot of people ask us how we manage to work together, because we share the same office. Luckily, we very seldom fall out. We're lucky that we get on so well," says Garry.

Garry and Hazel met when the business had a second, tape shop on George Street. Next door was a travel agents where Hazel worked, and the rest is history. "Back in those days, the good-old days, record companies had incentives to buy their products," says Garry.

> "WE HAD THE NEW RECORDS IN BEFORE WE WENT FOR THE OLD ONES. THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS YOU CAN'T GET ON BRAND NEW VINYL BUT YOU CAN GET ON SECOND-HAND"
>
> **CRAIG SMITH**

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"One of the main ones, Pie Records, put on a competition that we won, and Hazel and I went to Cannes in the South of France. It was the year we were married, we've been working together for a long time."

The Concorde team is entrenched in the business. Each component part has their own job and responsibilities. Each plays a key role, and the shop wouldn't be what it is without the bond between the four-strong squad. Like many family-run businesses, Concorde's strength is in its people, as much as the records they sell.

MUSIC THERAPY

Garry has been surrounded by music all his life. Perhaps, not surprisingly, at the end of his working day when he has shut up shop and is back home relaxing with a comforting beverage, his first thought isn't to dig out his favourite gatefold double album or unwrap the latest extended 12" single. He doesn't even have a record player. After decades of searching out limited-edition picture discs and obscure bootlegs, the last thing Garry yearns for is the crackle of stylus on groove.

"My wife and I have nothing at home apart from the odd CD lying about or a spare LP up in the loft," he says. "I enjoy all music, but because you're working with it all the time, at night I like listening to the radio. People laugh when I tell them I don't have a record collection at home. Saying that, it could be argued that my collection is in the shop."

While Garry contents himself with the radio and his ever-expanding stamp collection (his true passion), his customers' desire to collate tunes ensures Concorde has become a regular haunt for music lovers the world over. "We had a couple in yesterday from Bermuda," says Garry. "He spent about £165 on CDs. I couldn't believe it. He said he was getting them for his car back home and didn't like buying music over the internet. He must have had plenty of room in his suitcase!" ●

For more information on Concorde Music go to www.concordemusic.com

FANTASTIC FOUR

These are a few of the owner's favourite things

Garry Smith may own the oldest independent, family-run, record shop in Scotland, but he finds picking out his favourite records challenging. Near-on impossible. "I never really sit down and listen to albums these days, so choosing my favourite records, off the top of my head, oh God!" After a slow start, Garry gets into the swing of things and before long the album titles are flying. "I used to be a big Shadows fan in the 1960s," he says thoughtfully. "At one point I used to have all their LPs." He continues: "Actually, the two albums that really stand out going back to my earlier days would be Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* and The Who's *Tommy*. I think it was the concept aspect of both albums in that they both told a story, especially *Tommy*. Another one I liked was Wings' *Band On The Run*. Nowadays, albums are made of 10 tracks just laid down, whereas back in those days, bands made albums that were meant to be listened to, in the right order."

THE SHADOWS
THE SHADOWS

ELTON JOHN
GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

THE WHO
TOMMY

WINGS
BAND ON THE RUN

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The Trip

BORDEAUX

The intrepid **Mark Elliott** jets off to the south west of France in search of 7" picture sleeves

Wine is what Bordeaux is really all about, but as France's sixth-biggest city, there's a reasonable amount of cratedigging to be done here, provided you get the opening hours right. Some of the shops here still formally shut for lunch. Who honestly takes a regular lunch in the 21st Century? Or is that the voice of the painfully pompous metropolitan elite you can hear?

Whatever your views on the values of an hour away from the grindstone, this is definitely an afternoon venue, with the majority of the shops here only getting into their stride in the second half of the day.

Most of the venues are situated in the Saint-Paul district and you can reach them all within about 20 minutes' walk of each other. Tucked away down charming shopping streets, this can feel as though you're walking through a guidebook, with an amazing array of churches and fine buildings around every corner of this UNESCO World Heritage site (although the ugly corporate hub on the edge of the historic quarter is a 1960s eyesore).

There's not an over-abundance of shops, meaning you can get round the list in a day quite easily, with time for a long leisurely lunch (if you can't beat them, join them) and an evening of sampling the local speciality!

There are all manner of vintage shops springing up here and I found some records in a handful, suggesting there's a steady amount of welcome gentrification underway and, with luck, more attics getting cleared of long-lost used vinyl.

I wasn't able to be there on a Friday or Saturday, so missed the well-regarded but lightly opening Bam Balam Records (29 Cours Pasteur; bambalam.com) but visited everywhere else I could find. A couple of stores appeared to have closed recently, which is part of the sad inevitability of this type of expedition, despite vinyl's recent revival.

Still, with a buoyant music scene, this city is the home of electronic duo Kap Bambino, and a selection of great bars makes this an excellent weekend away. If you're staying for longer, a drive around the region after my day here offered up loads of dépôt-ventes (those French institutions selling second-hand goods on commission) and there were some interesting finds here, too.

Germany is the best country on the continent to go record shopping, but French picture sleeves and pretty good prices on the whole make France a very close contender.

Bordeaux isn't Paris, but is definitely worth spending some time in. But Bordeaux isn't Bourdeau either – just make sure you go to the right place. I'd headed off to the airport and got an anxious text from a friend, suggesting I was wasting my time. She thought I was headed for 'Bourdeau' in south-eastern France and knew there were unlikely to be record shops there. How smug I felt – until I found out the hotel I had booked hurriedly for that evening had fallen through…

There's a reasonable amount of cratedigging, provided you get the opening hours right

Illustration Ben Talon

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❶ FNAC
50 Rue Sainte-Catherine
fnac.com
Opening hours
10am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday; 11am to 7pm Sunday

❷ LE BOUDOIR SONORE
58 Rue Saint-Rémi le comptoir saint-rémi
facebook.com/leboudoirsonore
Opening hours
3.30pm to 8pm Monday; 10am to 8pm Tuesday to Friday; 10am to 7pm Saturday

❸ TOTAL HEAVEN
6 Rue de Candale
pier.vidal.free.fr
Opening hours
2pm to 9pm Monday; 11am to 7.30pm Tuesday to Saturday

❹ OCD
153 Rue Sainte-Catherine
ocd.fr
Opening hours
10.30am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday

❺ DIABOLO MENTHE
30 Rue de Cheverus
diabolo-menthe-bordeaux.com
Opening hours
2pm to 7pm Tuesday to Saturday

❻ DEEP END RECORDS
16 Rue de la Porte Basse
Opening hours
2.30pm to 6.30pm Tuesday to Saturday

❼ DISC' AYRES
61 Rue des Ayres
facebook.com/discayres
Opening hours
2.30pm to 6.30pm Tuesday to Friday; 2.30pm to 6pm Saturday

❽ LIBRAIRIE-DISQUE MICITA
7 Place de la Ferme Richemont
librairie-disque-micita-bordeaux.business.site
Opening hours
11am to 1pm, 2.30pm to 7pm Tuesday to Saturday

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1 FNAC

This French chain is always worth a mention, and has some great deals. The megastore on Rue Sainte-Catherine, the city's main shopping street, is following the international direction of multimedia retail – rows of CDs and DVDs being replaced by racks of records – and vinyl is priced keenly, so there are bargains to be had for Brit travellers. Cast's 2015 reissue of their 1995 *All Change* – the highest-selling debut in the history of the Polydor label – costs me less than a tenner, and I pick up Suede's *Coming Up* reissue for €15, too.

2 LE BOUDOIR SONORE

Less a record shop, more a bright little stall inside a craft-centre/concierge service (no, me neither), this has a tight selection of mainly used vinyl and a couple of decks to try it on. A friend later translates for me that this is actually a social-enterprise scheme, where small traders club together to set up business in a property otherwise beyond their means. It is right in the heart of the upmarket shopping district and prices are on the high side – €10 for a Sade single from 1988 (admittedly the non-charting and therefore less plentiful *Turn My Back On You*), but the prices for a good range of soul and disco are spot-on. A nice touch is the various graphic pieces dotted around the space, including a neat poster illustrating the best way to remove a record from its sleeve. I'm sure we've all winced when watching less-informed fellow shoppers clumsily man-handle a nice pressing of *The White Album*… imagine what it feels like if it is your own stock!

This is actually a social enterprise scheme, where small traders club together to set up business in a property otherwise beyond their means

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3 TOTAL HEAVEN

Now, the perennial frustration for all cratediggers is the sometimes freestyle approach to stated opening hours employed by some record shops. Case in point, Total Heaven, which on my visit isn't open. A return trip after lunch makes the extra effort worthwhile, as this is just the sort of store we all can make time for. The stock is mainly new and I find a lot of Record Store Day releases from this year (and previous events) that have long since sold out in the UK. It does reinforce my personal opinion that supply appears largely more plentiful than demand for all but the most limited of issues these days. Whether or not this is a good thing will depend on how up you are for queuing on the big day, of course. There's a decent

I find a lot of Record Store Day releases from this year that have long since sold out in the UK

range of everything at Total Heaven – the modern dance is balanced by good stock of 60s and 70s. I spend a bit in the sale section and pick up a couple of used 12"s by The Style Council that were gaps in my collection.

4 OCD

This national chain of new and used CDs and DVDs has a small vinyl area that's smaller here than some I have visited. You're unlikely to find much at OCD of any rarity, but it's always worth a look if you are passing. There is a lot of used Gary Numan in the racks outside for a few Euros apiece, but finding it means wading through acres of anonymous French pop from the 1970s, a genre beyond even my broad boundaries. The nearby Cash Converters (approach these shops with caution, as sleeves here often carry different discs in my experience) and second-hand bookshop (Bouquinerie) don't carry anything of interest, just battered, poor-condition copies of MOR and Easy Listening.

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5 DIABOLO MENTHE

This must be my favourite of all the stores in Bordeaux. It's a proper cratedigger's paradise, but comes with the added advantage of being pretty well organised with some very interesting finds. Again, being a pop collector, it always gets me excited when I see decent sections for The Jacksons and Madonna. Case in point here. But despite needing an excuse to celebrate the Queen Of Pop's recent 60th birthday, the bootlegs are the only items I don't already own and they are on the pricey side. I do have more luck on the Duran Duran shelf (see how seriously they take their pop). I find a near-mint copy of the *Strange Behaviour* Italian 12" picture disc from 1987 and the price is excellent. There are other Europop treasures – a rare 12" for Modern Talking's later comeback smash, *You Are Not Alone*, and the Spanish 7" of Michael Jackson's *In The Closet*. Rock and, particularly, pop is well served here, but there are big sections of lounge, soul and even classical. This place has been going since 1996 and I can see why it's so successful. The memorabilia is drawing me in as well, but as ever on these trips courtesy of the budget airlines, I'm mindful about the Draconian luggage allowances…

Being a pop collector, it always get me excited when I see decent sections for The Jacksons and Madonna

6 DEEP END RECORDS

This cramped but stylish record shop is one that keeps you guessing. Few of the records are individually priced, despite being neatly categorised. It could be a crafty sales technique (drawing you in before the folly of your interest is cruelly exposed) or it could just be poor planning. Anyway, my beautiful €60 copy of The Supremes' *Stop! In The Name Of Love* French EP has to stay behind (I am trying to moderate my spending), but I do pick up a more affordable copy of the Giorgio Moroder soundtrack to *Metropolis* and a mint edition of the score to Derek Jarman's *The Last Of England*. My obsession with French 7" picture sleeves gets a welcome indulgence when I'm directed to a very healthy stack under the counter – he does a deal on those, but I guess there's not as much call for these PWL and the like beauties. Clearly, that later Hit Factory is not quite as collectable as the first…

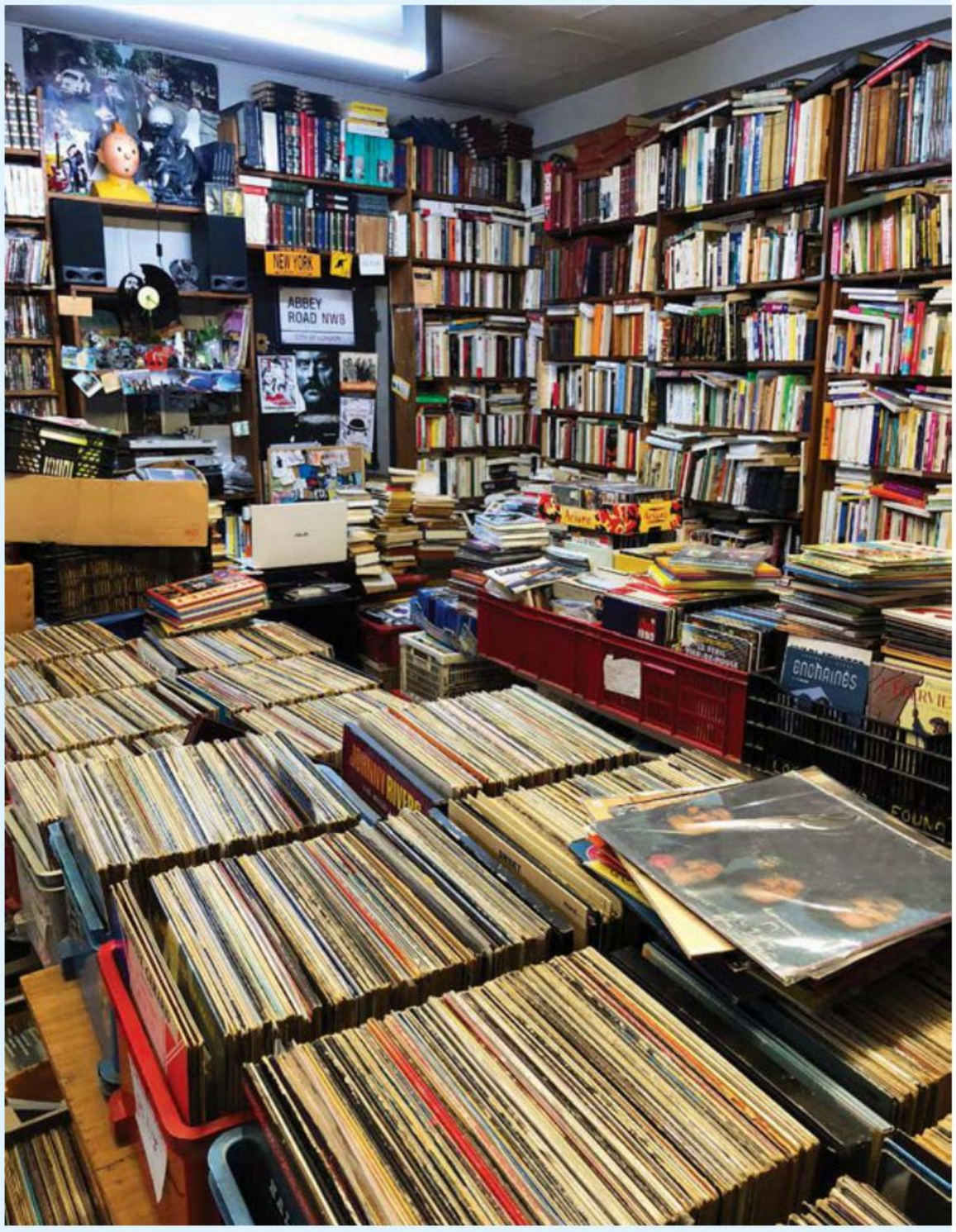
7 DISC' AYRES

The shopping trolley loaded with French MOR gently warping in the sun outside this shop doesn't bode well. I think even those records need some love and attention, so I'm not happy, but this proves a surprising stop on my trip. The filing is a bit all over the place, but there are some good finds, especially for soul and funk collectors. A lot of decent Sound Of Philadelphia singles, which made a big impact in France, are a couple of Euros apiece and I even pick up some synth pop, including the first issue of Tears For Fears' *Pale Shelter* – billed *Pale Shelter (You Don't Give Me Love*) for its first 1982 12" release, which is a much better title. The chap behind the counter takes a Gallic disinterest in everything I'm doing, but perks up a bit when I bring a couple of piles of records to his desk to settle up. I'm likely his first customer in what has obviously been a very long day already. He hasn't even closed for lunch…

The chap behind the counter takes a Gallic disinterest in everything I'm doing, but perks up a bit when I bring a couple of piles of records to his desk to settle up

GETTING THERE

Bordeaux is served by one airport in the suburbs and buses take you the five miles to the city centre every few minutes. If you're arriving or departing on one of the budget carriers, you'll be directed to Terminal Billi, which is a glorified shed next door and is as glamorous as it sounds. Trains can now get you from Paris in around two hours and take you to the Gare de Bordeaux-Saint-Jean. This faster service has been in operation only about a year and is set to transform travel in the region. Once inside the city, there are trams and buses everywhere, but walking and, crucially, orientation is straightforward enough. I didn't find taxis especially plentiful and many of the shopping streets are not set up for much traffic at all.



8 LIBRAIRE-DISQUE MICITA

With equal space given to records as to books, this doesn't look especially promising, but is actually a close runner-up to Diabolo Menthe for interesting stuff. All the vinyl is in excellent condition (although the pricing isn't very clear, so it's easy to rack up a lot of cost without realising). A copy of, say, Def Leppard's *Hysteria* in near-mint condition is €10, which is pretty good (despite that appalling exchange rate us Brits face against the Euro currently).

The 7" singles, again some interesting, less commonly seen stuff, are even in alphabetical order (a man after my own heart) and I pick up some clean Lennon singles in those collectable French picture sleeves. This is a cramped shop and I sense there is plenty buried under the shelves and precarious piles of books I'm navigating. Were I blessed with more time, I'd stay, but my day is drawing to a close and the couple of decent bags full of records I have with me are already likely to raise eyebrows with Ryanair. It's time to call it a day and try to find a hotel in the right city… ●

My day is drawing to a close and the couple of decent bags full of records I have with me are already likely to raise eyebrows with Ryanair

Top five

1 MARKET SQUARE HEROES

If you've never been to a flea market in France, you've led a sheltered life. They are an institution here and Bordeaux has a handful worth a visit. The most regular is at Duburg Square, each day except Saturday and Monday from 7am, but true connoisseurs will time their visit for Foire à la Brocante des Quinconces, which takes place in the Place des Quinconces twice a year in the spring and autumn (check bordeauxquinconces.com for precise timings).

2 DEEPER UNDERGROUND

If something a bit leftfield is your thing, there's a vibrant underground music and art scene in the city. The shop Total Heaven stocks a lot of flyers and bdxc.fr carries the best range of listings.

3 MUSIC MAKES THE PEOPLE COME TOGETHER…

Sights such as The Grand Theatre are testament to the fact that culture has had a longstanding patronage here, but it's almost exclusively classically oriented. Krakatoa (krakatoa.org) would likely be the locals' pick for the most diverse programme, while Rock School Barbey (rockschool-barbey.com) is where to catch the up-and-comers from France and further afield. Both The White Stripes and Kings Of Leon played here when they were starting out.

4 FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION

There are a number of decent record fairs in the city across the year. The French site cdandlp.com has listings across the country and the tourism site (in English) also carries details of some (bordeaux-tourism.co.uk).

5 RED, RED WINE

You really can't come to this city without sampling some of the region's most famous export. The £63 million Cité du Vin is the must-see attraction here and gives you a fantastic, high-tech insight into how the wine is produced and transported around the world. You can taste the stuff, too. It certainly makes you appreciate that glass all the more…

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DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Discover why a trip to a thrift store in Manhattan caused record shop owner **Mark O'Shaughnessy**'s heart to skip a beat...

The question I get asked the most, as a record shop owner, is what is the most expensive record you've ever sold? It's one I normally duck, as the answer might lead people to think that I'm some kind of 'vinyl millionaire', which I am not!

Before opening two record stores in Bath, I was a mail-order dealer, had been for 25 years – and the quest for interesting records to sell on these paper lists took me all over the world and most often to the States.

I was never quite sure what I'd find on these USA trips and it was this element of surprise that kept me going back. But, by 2013, I was beginning to tire of the travelling, so I made a personal promise that the trip I was about to make to NYC in October of that year would be my last.

I flew into JFK as I'd done so many times down the years, planning to revisit some favourite spots. I decided to try my luck in and around Greenwich Village on my second day in town. Record shopping in that little metropolis wasn't what it once was and many of the bigger Downtown stores (including Bleecker Bob's) had closed. The upside of the 'death' of record stores in the Village was that in their place sprung up a slew of thrift stores.

Just like the UK, the best time to hit the thrift stores is first thing Monday morning, as that's when the donations they receive on Friday and Saturday are put out. And, guess what day it was? Yep, Monday.

As I strolled into Washington Square Park, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted an assistant putting out some boxes onto a table just outside a thrift called Goodwill Industries, definitely one I'd not seen before.

There on the floor were four boxes of 7" singles. I gathered the boxes around my feet and put my record bag on top of them, which is common pro-dealer practice to prevent other diggers from trying to get a look in.

Amazingly, most of these 45s were still in sleeves, not necessarily the right sleeves, but any sleeve is better than none. I went through and pulled out a good few NYC/NJ local-area soul/funk/disco items, no boners, but definitely decent stock.

I got to the last box, already happy with my haul, when there and then I spotted a silver/blue label called Queen City... in a plain sleeve, *Job Opening* by the Del-Larks. My heart skipped a beat. I quickly but carefully took the 7" from the box and laid it on top of my other finds. I guess many would have quit and left the rest. Not me, I went all the way through the box and then walked up to the counter to pay.

The teller took my pile from me and counted them up like he was dealing out a pack of cards: "23 rekkids at a buck a pop is 23 bucks buddy," he barked at me. I peeled off a $50, and waited politely for my change.

Such was the 'rushed' nature of the trip, that I didn't actually get time to look back through that stack of 7"s again until I got back to London. The first thing I did when I got home was to check that the Del-Larks had the Bell stamp in the deadwax, any other deadwax marking would denote a bootleg or second press. This one had the Bell stamp. Yesssssss!

I got to the last box, when there and then I spotted a silver/blue label called Queen City... in a plain sleeve, Job Opening by the Del-Larks

I'd say this original Del-Larks 45 is a Northern Soul Holy Grail. So rare, and not many bona-fide originals in existence. So much so that I got a certified NS expert to confirm authentication. I also thought it better that he handled the sale, as his 'seal of approval' would quell any doubters and ensure that the optimum price was achieved.

A private online auction was set up and £999.99 was set as the starting bid. It hit £2,000 within 10 minutes, then £2,500 within the next 10. Short pause, then £3,000 was blinking in front of me, £4,000 followed quickly. Less than a minute later, £5,000 flashed up on the screen. Then £6,500, but we weren't done yet, £7,000 was staring at me. I literally could not speak. A slight delay, then £7,500 was right there in front of my eyes. £8,000, £8,250, £8,500. It kept going up. Then a quick flurry and the auction ended. The final price was £8,611! I stared at the screen in utter disbelief. Absolutely silly money.

So, now I guess you know why I just don't tell people what my most expensive ever record was, because, frankly, I don't think they would believe me, but, this is fact. A dollar-bin 7" from a thrift store in central Manhattan went through the roof in a private auction. This is why I NEVER stop looking, people... happy digging! ●

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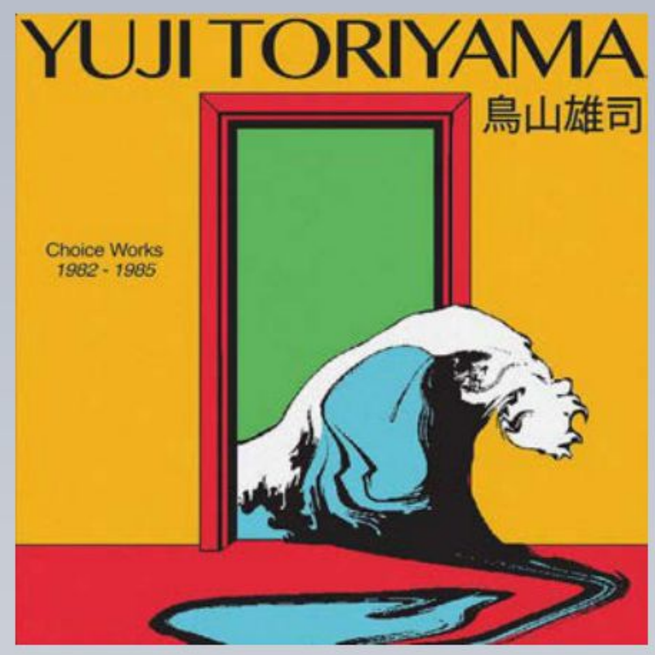
Time Capsule

Chris Parkin speaks to Kay Suzuki, founder of reissue label Time Capsule, whose releases are informed by the spirit of club pioneer and audiophile David Mancuso



Citing dance-music revolutionary David Mancuso as one of the driving inspirations for starting your reissue label is a good way to attract a crowd. The New York DJ's 70s Loft parties are the stuff of legend: he helped lay the foundations for club culture. He was also an audiophile, on a never-ending quest to give clubbers the best possible sound.

"David's vision for the party wasn't about running the most popular club night, but about having an amazing house party without compromising the experience you get from recorded music," explains Kay Suzuki of the pioneering influence behind his London reissue label, Time Capsule. "One of his audio philosophies was to capture the full expression of records, sonically and emotionally."

London's Beauty And The Beat party – spawned by the Lucky Cloud Sound System, which worked directly with Mancuso – has enshrined the disco trailblazer's ethos in its own manifesto, lugging around heavy vintage speakers and other "audiophile components" to parties, with the aim of teleporting people back to the time and place a record was made: "It's not about genre or style that defines the party; it's about the musical journey, which is intellectual, educational, unpredictable."

Beauty And The Beat eventually found a permanent home, at Hackney's Brilliant Corners, in which to spin an Afro-psychedelic soundtrack of spiritual jazz, African and Latin trance rhythms, acid rock, disco and house music, and krautrock. And out of its community of likeminded DJs and vinyl-obsessed friends, Time Capsule has emerged.

"I felt really blessed to be surrounded by such an amazing group of diggers, who teach me about so much great music," Suzuki says, referring to the moment, at a festival in 2017 when he first thought about setting up the label.

"I FEEL BLESSED TO BE SURROUNDED BY SUCH AN AMAZING GROUP OF DIGGERS… IF WE UNITE AS ONE COLLECTIVE MUSICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST, WE'LL KEEP DISCOVERING MUSIC WITH STORIES TO TELL"

"I thought, if we unite as one collective musical archaeologist, then we can keep discovering different types of music with stories to tell."

With help from his fellow Time Capsule "curators", and friends such as Japanese soul-and-boogie nut Ken Hidaka, the label made its debut appearance in the racks in September this year. First up was Italian synth and Moog-music pioneer Il Guardiano Del Faro's 1978 new-age album *Oasis*, followed by *Choice Works 1982-1985*, a five-track collection of raw, experimental synth-guitar funk from fusion wiz (and the man responsible for the *Street Fighter II* soundtrack) Yuji Toriyama. With Suzuki's Time Capsule curators all tabling fresh discoveries, records and artists whose stories they want told, there's more in the pipeline.

"I always call the music 'time art'," says Suzuki. "The music we believe in is usually a reflection of a person's consciousness from a specific time and place. It's about their art of reflecting the environment around them through a transcendent skill of expressing something beyond words. We want to get as close as possible to what the original artists intended to create, uniting old-school record nerds, vinyl DJs and modern music lovers tired of commodified music." ●

WorldMags.net

David Bowie

LOVING THE ALIEN (1983 – 1988)

PARLOPHONE

The fourth of the now-traditional annual David Bowie boxsets should be the first to make even hardcore Bowie fans pause before forking out £220. The unexpected scale of the success of *Let's Dance* undoubtedly spooked Bowie, and he didn't recover for the rest of the decade. No one, least of all Bowie himself, could pretend *Let's Dance*'s successors *Tonight* and *Never Let Me Down* are among his best albums. And yet, David Bowie being David Bowie, the reputation of his 1980s music is something he's managed to rectify here, despite the distinct disadvantage of being dead. The highlight of the box is *Never Let Me Down 2018* – Bowie apparently stated he wanted the album to be completely overhauled. Mario McNulty, previously a minor Bowie footnote as engineer on *The Next Day*, deserves enormous credit for turning the album on its head. Perfectly using past collaborators and string arranger Nico Muhly, what was previously a largely unlistenable textbook example of the mid 80s losing its collective mind now reveals there are some bloody lovely songs in there after all. What once reduced Bowie to sounding like Johnny Hates Jazz now feels of a piece with *Heathen* for being tasteful while retaining his mischief. Even the unlovely *Bang Bang* has learned to walk upright, while replacing Mickey Rourke's incoherent 'rap' on *Shining Star (Makin' My Love)* with the glacial Laurie Anderson is a majestic switch. The new, crisper sleeve is an upgrade, too. Of the pre-existing albums, Nile Rodgers' passionate essay in the book accompanying *Loving The Alien* makes clear just how unlikely *Let's Dance* was to be a gigantic seller in the post 'Disco Sucks' age. It's one of the original albums to be frontloaded with its best tracks, with *Ricochet* and *Criminal World* inexcusable filler on an album with only eight songs. That said, its singles remain carefree wonders. With its mix of originals and covers, *Tonight* always felt a stopgap. Bowie's take on Chuck Jackson's *I Keep Forgettin'* is possibly the most bloodless, leaden-footed song he ever made. But *Tonight* does contain the beautiful *Loving The Alien,* and his cover of *God Only Knows* is deliciously odd, so it's not the total turkey of legend. Whatever the wrongs of Bowie's songwriting and production during the 80s, his tours were expanding in scope: the two live albums here prove he was at home in the stadiums. *Serious Moonlight* is a solid transition up from arenas; even shorn of its visuals, *Glass Spider* is an OTT thrill. The rest of the box is now standard: *Re:Call 4* and *Dance* round up the non-album and 12" tracks, without of course any of the unreleased songs Bowie's estate is still very cautiously guarding. The book is reliably sumptuous, though its photos offer a distressing reminder of the moustache Bowie sported around *Tonight* that even he couldn't carry off. There are, as before, no download codes, a continuing scandal for £220. In essence, *Loving The Alien* is an excellently curated document of Bowie losing it, until the only thing left to do to escape the stadiums he was trapped in was to raze his career to the ground and start again. Hence Tin Machine… *John Earls*

VERDICT

8/10

WorldMags.net

This Mortal Coil

IT'LL END IN TEARS/ FILIGREE & SHADOW/ BLOOD

4AD

This Mortal Coil might exist as an indulgent footnote in 4AD's expansive history were it not that – given its artists, and Vaughan Oliver's grand packaging – indulgence suited the label's 1980s aesthetic well. With three lengthy albums over eight years, the collective – headed by 4AD founder Ivo Watts-Russell, alongside producer John Fryer – summarised the company's baroque, almost gothic intent, and, to boot, embraced an enviable line-up of music and musicians. Some were in-house, such as Liz Fraser, Kim Deal and Tanya Donelly; some not, like Shelleyan Orphan's Caroline Crawley and Breathless' Dominic Appleton. Similarly, TMC matched material by Watts-Russell and his associates (notably *Blood*'s *D.D. And E.*) with fascinating reinterpretations: a ravishing version of Tim Buckley's *Song To The Siren*, a prickly take on Talking Heads' *Drugs*, a loyal shot at Chris Bell's *I Am The Cosmos*... Such choices, as much as the performances, made these collections influential, though they're less haunting now than they once seemed.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The Kinks

ARE THE VILLAGE GREEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY

BMG

So behind the times when it was released in 1968 that it ended up being ahead of the curve, there's an added dimension to *Village Green*... when viewed through a mid-Brexit lens. Ray Davies' ode to the homeland of his childhood is wonderfully nuanced, though – The Kinks' songwriter is no one-dimensional little Englander.

Instead, this is a complex beast, from the wistful nostalgia of the (near) title track to the poignant musing on the passing of time, *Do You Remember Walter?*, neat character sketch *Johnny Thunder* and the bucolic *Sitting By The Riverside*. The dark psychedelia of the Dave Davies-sung *Wicked Annabella* is an anomaly, but a welcome, muscular addition nevertheless. Remarkably prescient, *People Take Pictures Of Each Other* pithily foretells the way many curate their social-media profiles.

The Super Deluxe boxset includes a double-vinyl LP of new stereo and mono remastered versions alongside the continental 12-track incarnation, three 7" replica singles and seven CDs featuring bonus tracks, alternate takes, a hardback book and more.

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Television

MARQUEE MOON

RHINO

The *Marquee Moon* story is one well told. CBGB regulars Television never quite fit the 'punk' label, yet crafted one of the genre's finest albums, looking over their shoulder at the Velvet Underground with one eye while simultaneously etching the blueprint for countless post-punk acts to follow. Without Television, there'd be no Echo & The Bunnymen, Franz Ferdinand or Interpol, to name but three. Originally reissued and remastered on CD in 2003, while vinyl versions have followed, this deluxe edition is of merit due to the addition of five bonus tracks not on the original record. The inclusion of the band's raw debut single *Little Johnny Jewel (Parts 1 & 2)*, featuring a vertiginous meandering solo, will please fans, but the clattering *Untitled Instrumental* taken from the sessions for 1978's *Adventure* isn't a major attraction. Alternate versions of *See No Evil*, *Friction* and the title track don't stray far from the album takes, although a frenzied guitar solo in the verses of the former is to the fore. The majestic *Marquee Moon* inarguably deserved a vinyl reissue and this 2003 remaster, cut on blue vinyl, sounds clear and incisive enough to make it a worthwhile purchase. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

9/10

WorldMags.net

Richard Ashcroft

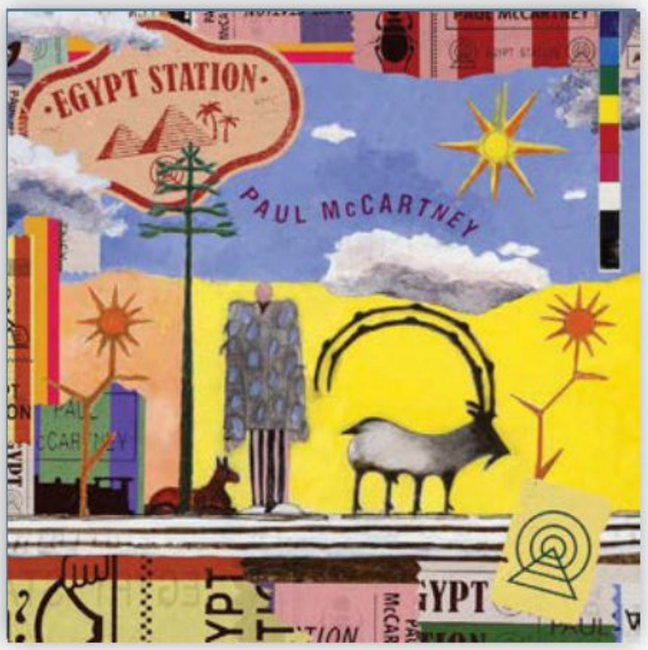
NATURAL REBEL

BMG

Those of us still longing for the bulging-eyed Richard Ashcroft of *A Northern Soul*-era Verve will have to accept he's put those days behind him. That said, there are moments on *Natural Rebel* where you can picture the veins standing out on his neck like the shamanic incarnation of old. He's a more relaxed, measured presence these days for the most part, but the passion still bubbles to the surface on the anthemic *All My Dreams* and rocking closer *Money Money*, the latter his feistiest solo cut to date – T. Rex-meets-Stones overdriven guitars grinding away in the background as Ashcroft rails against sell-out musicians. The upbeat *Surprised By The Joy* is lifted by lush strings, while the funkily choppy guitars of *Born To Be Strangers* drive one of his strongest songs since his former band parted company for the second time. The Gothic soul of *We All Bleed* also impresses – it's a rare return to the bleakness of his best mid-90s work, such as Verve B-side *The Crab* and, of course, *The Drugs Don't Work*. Even the cracks in weaker cuts such as the country-tinged *Birds Fly* are papered over by those extraordinary vocal cords. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10



Paul McCartney

EGYPT STATION

CAPITOL RECORDS

It says much about Paul McCartney's dominance of musical culture that for most of his 17th solo album, the only person to whom he can be compared is himself. His easy-going way with a melody remains instantly recognisable, and few people make a three-chord riff sound so fresh, especially at the age of 76. That he does this effortlessly on the joyful *Come On To Me*, and is still able to drop in a nod to Led Zeppelin's *Kashmir*, only stresses this further. Some of this is due to producer Greg Kurstin, who at times adds precisely the right reverb to McCartney's voice to evoke memories of classic Beatles performances, and at others – as on the delightfully innocent *Happy With You* – offers him the intimacy of *Ram*, all the time allowing his band to sound pleasantly organic. They're clearly having fun, too, when *Despite Repeated Warnings* bursts into a riff that's unmistakably like Wings' *Live And Let Die*, and most probably on *People Want Peace*, too, which seems deliberately geared to arouse recollections of *Pipes Of Peace*. At 16 tracks, though, *Egypt Station* gives McCartney room to do more than just conjure up past glories. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

Cypress Hill

ELEPHANTS ON ACID

BMG

Cypress Hill have always stood out in the pantheon of hip-hop royalty. The crown jewel of their discography, *Black Sunday*, reached No. 1 in the Billboard Chart the same year Wu-Tang's seminal debut *36 Chambers* and A Tribe Called Quest's *Midnight Marauders* were released.

Their early work sits somewhere in between the dichotomous shift from alternative hip-hop and Native Tongues to gangster rap in the early 90s, typified by those two antonymous records and fuelled by marijuana smoke.

Their ninth record, *Elephants On Acid*, which sees the return of DJ Muggs at the helm after 14 years away from the group, is a 21-track rap odyssey. The album has been germinating in Muggs' imagination since 2013 and has seen him take inspiration from around the world. He's recorded in Egypt, spent time alone in King Solomon's Tomb, made beats in Jordan after floating in the Dead Sea, and had psychedelic encounters at Joshua Tree. With B-Real and Sen Dog on point, too, *Elephants On Acid* is a triumphant return to idiosyncratic form. *Sam Willis*

VERDICT

7/10

WorldMags.net

Kurt Vile

BOTTLE IT IN

MATADOR

The follow-up to 2015's *B'lieve I'm Goin Down* is an open-hearted ode to travel and love, its sprawling songs recorded all over the USA and carrying the War On Drugs co-founder in new musical directions. *Bottle It In* clocks in at 75 minutes, with no fewer than four songs passing the seven-minute mark; Vile takes his time, and his laconic vocal style and expansive guitar playing are ever-present, but cameos from Cass McCombs, Kim Gordon, Mary Lattimore and Warpaint drummer Stella Mozgawa broaden the instrumental palate. Reverse guitar textures swirl around a classic Vile phrase on the loping *Bassackwards* as he reflects: "I was on the ground circa Planet Earth, but out of sorts". Lattimore's ornate harp playing and McCombs' backing vocals adorn the 10-minute title track, while *Mutinies* finds Vile lamenting "the small computer in my hand exploding/ I think things were easier with regular telephones", before Gordon's waves of rich feedback subsume the outro. A pleasure best savoured, not rushed. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10

Elvis Costello & The Imposters

LOOK NOW

CONCORD RECORDS

It's no wonder Burt Bacharach and Carole King agreed to make significant contributions to this wonderful collection. Raucous opener *Under Lime* illustrates Costello's deft articulacy right from its opening line – "It's a long way down from the high horse you're on" – and similarly striking is *I Let The Sun Go Down*, a McCartney-esque tune adorned with trumpets and strings. *Look Now* also finds him repeatedly playing female characters, whether on the affecting *Stripping Paper*, where he's a weary wife reminded how her relationship used not to be so hollow, or the deceptively chirpy *Unwanted Number*. But the best illustration of Costello's gift for complexity made accessible is *Burnt Sugar Is So Bitter*, written with King. Its psychological insight into the intricacies of male/female dynamics is worthy of John Updike's Rabbit books, and it's a testament to Costello that he should inspire such lofty comparisons so deep into his career. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

9/10

Echo & The Bunnymen

THE STARS, THE OCEANS & THE MOON

BMG

"I'm not doing this for anyone else," Ian McCulloch's said of these 13 reinterpreted tunes from his band's back catalogue, plus two new songs. Still, he's releasing it, because a man's got to earn a living, especially when he's paying for what he calls "strings and things". McCulloch's voice fortunately still boasts that appealingly weary, husky quality of old, but whether these versions offer the requisite longevity to make this valuable for others depends upon your loyalty. A piano-led, string-soaked *The Killing Moon* is more than justifiable, and *Bring On The Dancing Horses* rarely fails to make one swoon, while *Ocean Rain*'s orchestral arrangement leaves room for warmth. But a stripped-back version of *Seven Seas* sacrifices drama for intimacy, and *The Cutter* lacks the intense claustrophobia of the original, while *Lips Like Sugar* sounds somewhat pale in comparison to the 1987 original. You'd be forgiven for mistaking *Rescue* for a lost Doors tune, too. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

WorldMags.net

John Carpenter

HALLOWEEN OST

SACRED BONES

There's something satisfying in the way John Carpenter's finally been able to reap the rewards of his increasingly influential soundtracks. He may no longer be directing films like *Halloween*, but he is at least still furnishing its latest instalment with its creepy accompaniment. So, just as Jamie Lee Curtis will reappear on the big screen, so that unforgettable *Halloween Theme* remains present here too, given extra resonance by both time and technology – there are moments throughout worthy of Björk favourite The Haxan Cloak – and re-adopted to boost anxiety as part of pieces such as *The Shape Returns*. Accompanied by his son, Cody Carpenter, and godson, Daniel Davies, the composer in fact remains largely true to the original's style, able to render a solo piano in *The Bogeyman* utterly chilling and building unbearable tension on *Trap The Shape*. One can only hope the film's worthy of the dread that he and his cohorts inspire.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

8/10

This Will Destroy You

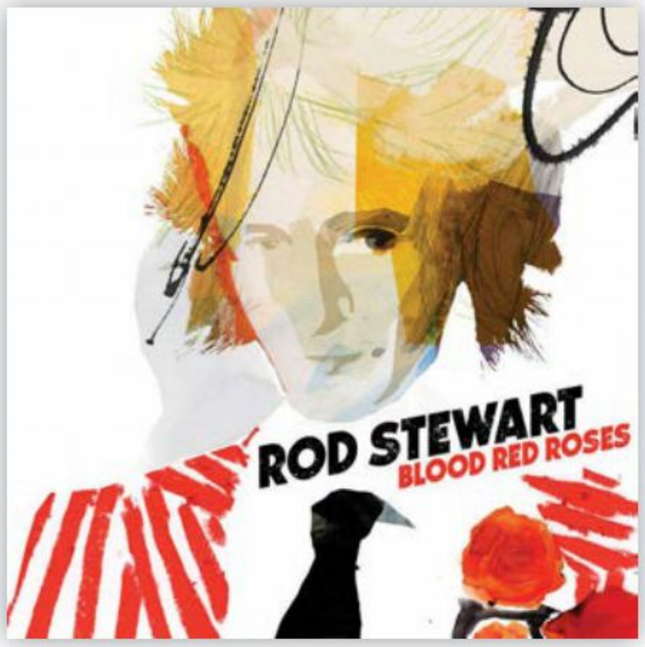
NEW OTHERS PART ONE

DARK OPERATIVE

Flitting from the breakneck speed of *Syncage* and the oppressive weight of *Weeping Window* to the rapturous *Go Away Closer*, *New Others Part One* is an ambitious return from This Will Destroy You. There's an array of dynamic and experimental shifts over the relatively short 38-minute runtime – the textural *Allegiance* and off-kilter *Like This* making for memorable interludes among the aforementioned heavy-hitters. It's an engaging continuation of the Texas quartet's exploration of sound, harking back to the days of their self-titled debut and *Tunnel Blanket*, while still pushing towards new auditory realms. Yet *New Others Part One* feels somewhat incomplete; a resonant and emotional narrative that's unsure of where it's really headed. It suffers from a lack of direction in its opening moments which, while never detracting from the power of the rest of the record, dilutes the dichotomy of hope and mourning that the band have become masters at weaving. *Chris Mackin*

VERDICT

8/10



Rod Stewart

BLOOD RED ROSES

DECCA RECORDS

Refusing either to burn out or fade away, Rod Stewart loiters in the background, waving coiffured locks every few years to promote a new album that somehow earns Platinum awards without straying from familiar paths. He's still the proud possessor of an immediately recognisable voice, however, and it's enough to distract from the grating guitar chords providing foundation to *Julia* – inspired by a riff heard, bizarrely, on Celtic's TV channel – and from *Cold Old London*'s overegged backing vocals. On *Rest Of My Life*, too, he captures some of the joy of the Motown hits which inspired it. But there are so many ungainly swipes at the charts, such as the weary *Look In Her Eyes*, and an excess of hackneyed ideas – he's genuinely "heading down the highway" on obligatory rocker *Vegas Shuffle*, then goes Gaelic on the title track – that, were it not for its name, one might call this 30th studio album bloodless.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

6/10

WorldMags.net

REVIEWS

Cat Power
WANDERER
DOMINO

A new Cat Power record is always a welcome one, as Chan Marshall's songs continue to outlast and outshine many other one-time-promising songwriters. *Wanderer* is a stripped-back offering: sparse piano tinkles, tip-tap percussion, shuffling drums, subtle guitar strums and Marshall's endlessly listenable and melodic voice riding up front and centre. The album positions Marshall wandering through her own life: "My journey so far," she says, although it's not an album that feels especially nostalgic. Instead, it feels like a 'coming out of the other side' sort of record, as it touches upon previous problems and issues that Marshall is trying to leave behind her. On *Wanderer*, she has managed to use a stop-and-look-back record to be philosophically reflective, but musically, the album still possesses momentum. It's a record that still very much exists within the classic Cat Power sonic framework, but is a new chapter in an increasingly impressive songbook.
Daniel Dylan Wray

VERDICT
8/10

Yoko Ono
WARZONE
CHIMERA MUSIC

There's no doubting Yoko Ono's sincerity: *Warzone*'s title track begins with jungle sounds brutally disturbed by machine-gun fire, before she starts wailing passionate warnings in that inimitable fashion. But though there's something primitive about her soundscapes, like a latter-day Scott Walker album on an IKEA budget, it's when she describes "Men flashing their guns and balls/ Women looking like barbie dolls" that you realise how indispensable her work's literal nature is. Furthermore, much of *Warzone* – which reimagines songs from her extensive catalogue – is more listenable than that opening shock suggests. Naturally, *Why*'s bestial howls aren't easy on the ear, and *Woman Power*'s raucous garage rock confirms how, aged 85, Ono's still full of fury. But the hypnotic *Hell In Paradise* quietly mocks us for being "Underqualified for love/ Overqualified for life" and *I Love All Of Me* provides redemption, while *I Love You Earth* is powerfully heartfelt, and a closing *Imagine* eerily sparse. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT
8/10

The KVB
ONLY NOW FOREVER
INVADA RECORDS

On their sixth LP, Berlin-based UK duo Nicholas Wood and Kat Day continue to explore the hazy overspill between stirring electronics, immersive shoegaze, dreamy pop and pulsing psychedelia. After so many albums, the pair appear to have reached a state of seamless synchronicity, as the woozy vocals glide in and out of shimmering synthesisers and glistening ambient textures that sparkle with an 80s gleam, but manage to remain devoid of wistfulness. The current mode the band find themselves in resembles later-period The Horrors, as synths, electronics, melodic vocal parts and thoughtful structures replace the hard-edged fury of earlier material. The self-produced approach allows texture to be the driving force of the record, shifting between floating, almost meditative grooves and more sprightly, expansive or occasionally brooding bursts – ending up where psychedelic ambience meets electronic pop. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT
8/10

WorldMags.net

Ane Brun & The Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra

LIVE AT BERWALDHALLEN

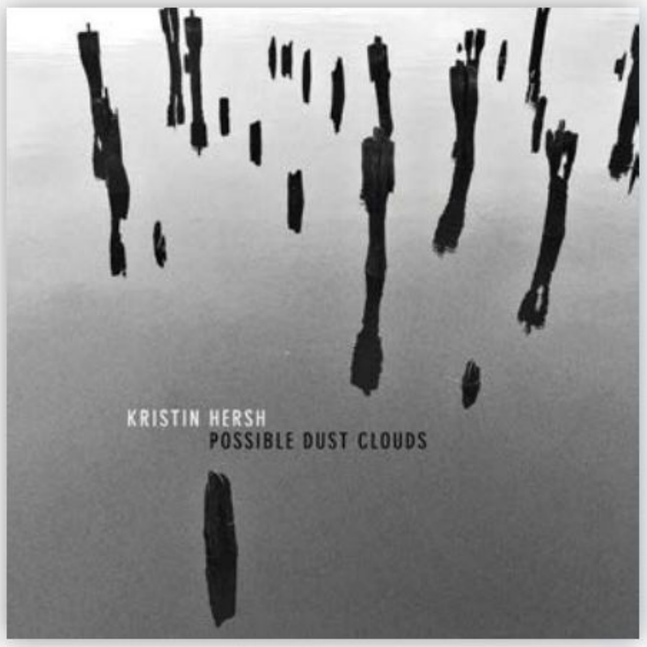
BALLOON RANGER RECORDINGS

One can always rely on Scandinavia's top chanteuse to deliver goosebumps, as this extravagant 74-minute document of three triumphant performances at Stockholm's grand Berwald Hall proves. She offers a sophisticated adaption of a Shakespeare sonnet, *When My Love Swears That He Is Made Of Truth*, while *Shape Of A Heart* has an Eastern flavour, conjured by lavish strings and bold stabs of brass. Conductor Hans Ek is responsible for many of the arrangements here (as well as for orchestrating the *Let The Right One In* soundtrack), and Brun's voice swoops and soars around them majestically throughout. Beyoncé's *Halo*, meanwhile – reduced to its benevolent essence – and a grandly scored version of Björk's *Joga* reiterate her peerless interpretative skills. Nothing, though, matches passionately stirring closer *Undertow*: "Let me rise towards the sky," she sings, and she does.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

9/10



Kristin Hersh

POSSIBLE DUST CLOUDS

FIRE RECORDS

"Sometimes the most subversive thing I can do musically is adhere to standard song structure, sometimes the creepiest chords are the ones we've heard before, twisted into different shapes..." Usually Throwing Muses' Lennon to Tanya Donelly's McCartney, Kristin Hersh has opted for tunes on her 10th solo album. Not only that, but she's gone for a late-80s jugular, which will be catnip to Throwing Muses followers. Kicking off with bass-led, airport-ennui jam *LAX*, this is a record which swerves away from added orchestration like previous albums and – aside from being issued on silver vinyl – relies solely on its musical content. Standouts include *No Shade In Shadow* and *Breathe In*. *Fox Point* is classic stuff: a pretty arpeggio, giving way to a monster repeated riff; just don't ask what its about: "Today, the County Clerk of Orleans Parish dropped the call twice, then coldcalled/ 'Baby, baby, your new adventure will be mindblowing'." Anyone? Answers on a postcard.

Ben Wardle

VERDICT

7/10

Hugh Cornwell

MONSTER

SONY MUSIC

That ex-Stranglers frontman Cornwell has softened is evident from the bonus disc of rudimentary acoustic renditions of some of his former band's singles and deep cuts accompanying his ninth solo album. *No More Heroes*, for instance, sounds unusually cosy in such a fireside setting. *Monster*, however, suggests he still has an edge, albeit primarily in his choice of subjects. Opener *Pure Evel*, which sounds a lot like *My Nation Underground*-era Julian Cope, concerns Evel Knievel, while Mussolini inspired the cranky closer *Duce Coochie Man*, and Hedy Lamarr is the focus of the rumbling, understated *The Most Beautiful Girl In Hollywood*. He also recalls his mother's cold heart and cold swims on *La Grande Dame*, while *Robert*, which echoes the arch pop of The Chills and The Go-Betweens, tackles President Mugabe. Cornwell lacks the satisfying spite of his earlier years, it's true, but the restraint shown here definitely helps spotlight his lyrics.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

6/10

WorldMags.net

Jon Spencer

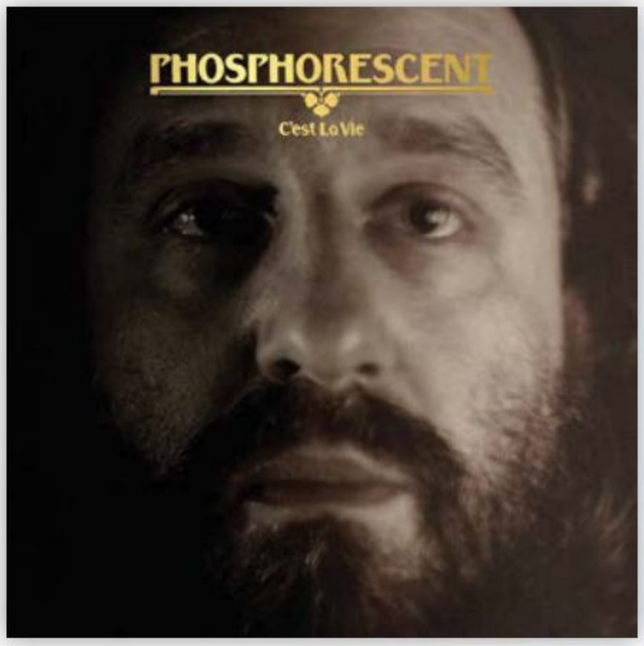
SPENCER SINGS THE HITS

IN THE RED RECORDS

One freezing Michigan day this January, Jon Spencer was wrapped up warm and out digging through a snowbound junkyard. He was looking for metal. Finding an old Chevy (what else?), he began to remove the petrol tank. The scrap dealer sauntered over and asked the strange, jet-haired 53-year-old digger whether it was for a school project. It's a lovely image – the last thing you'd expect self-proclaimed "swank-fucking master of Pussy Galore" to be mistaken for is a school teacher. But actually, in upholding garage rock's authenticity for 35 years, Spencer is an educator; this particular project required scrap metal to provide some Pussy Galore-style percussion – indeed, former PG drummer Bob Bert will be joining Spencer on tour later this year. The Blues Explosion frontman's first solo album continues the retro party pretty much where his band left off on 2015's *Freedom Tower – No Wave Dance Party*, itself a mini history lesson on Spencer's beloved New York. If you've heard opening track and lead-off single *Do The Trash Can*, it'll be clear that once again, Spencer is furnishing the musical landscape with a tapestry of *Nuggets*-era garage rock. *Ben Wardle*

VERDICT

8/10



Phosphorescent

C'EST LA VIE

DEAD OCEANS

In the five years following Matthew Houck's last LP as Phosphorescent, he's moved city, had children and nearly died of meningitis. You'd therefore forgive him if he returned with a record that sounded a little scattered or reflected such turmoil, sonically. Instead, *C'est La Vie* sparkles with a sense of self-assuredness that can also be heard in the pristine production work. At times, the album feels ponderous and reflective; Houck's voice sounding dreamy and longing. At other moments, as on single *New Birth In New England*, there's a buoyancy that skips along with the pop-kissed charm of prime-era Paul Simon. Houck settles neatly into this realm of the classic singer-songwriter, but his palate always seems to be about pushing into the future as much as kicking around in the past. Such an example is *Around The Horn*, which takes meticulous songcraft and seamless melody and stretches it out into guitar-chugging psychedelic rock, almost as if Neu! went Americana.
Daniel Dylan Wray

VERDICT

7/10

CAVE

ALLWAYS

DRAG CITY

Chicago's Cave have been exploring the vast terrains of instrumental music for over a decade now, shifting between monolithic drones and more lively psychedelic eruptions. On their sixth full-length LP, all bets appear to be off as they offer up one of their most varied and rewarding records to date. The album is in perpetual service to the groove, and it seems not to matter to Cave one iota which avenue the groove decides to turn down. Locked into endless rhythms, the band weave between genres like a greased-up snake, sliding into jazz, rock, psychedelia, minimalism and even capturing the free-flow nature of Fela Kuti-esque Afrobeat on tracks such as *San' Yago*. The album remains coherent in tone and pacing, but ultimately it feels like a voyage through a deeply eclectic record collection, simply stopping where it wishes and picking out a new sound.
Daniel Dylan Wray

VERDICT

8/10

WorldMags.net

Various Artists
THE MAN FROM MO'WAX
ISLAND/UMC

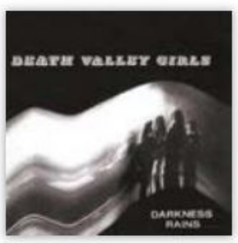
Released on striking blue and red heavyweight vinyl, this companion to the film of the same name is a reminder of the far-reaching talents of DJ, producer and musician James Lavelle. The tracklisting nods to artists who've inspired Lavelle, such as The Wild Bunch, and his collaborations with Ian Brown, Richard Ashcroft and Thom Yorke are all covered. Essential listening (and viewing).

Laura Gibson
GONERS
CITY SLANG

Portland multi-instrumentalist Gibson's fifth album is concerned more with wider existential fear than the personal loss that informed 2016's superb *Empire Builder*. The lyricism and musicianship remain of the highest quality, though, with Gibson's hushed ruminations and fable-like imagery evoking a dream state. Catch her on tour with Canadian singer-songwriter Dan Mangan this autumn.

Two Medicine
ASTROPSYCHOSIS
BELLA UNION

Midlake bassist Paul Alexander strikes out on his own on this solo debut, an opportunity to stretch the Texas band's alt-folk into more psychedelic territory. The dreamy abandon cloaks deeper concerns, with the band's name referencing a national park ceded by the Blackfeet tribe to the US nation, and Alexander further probes America's future on an expansive, thoughtful outing.



Death Valley Girls
DARKNESS RAINS
SUICIDE SQUEEZE

A loose touring clan built around singer Bonnie Bloomgarden and guitarist Larry Schemel, LA's Death Valley Girls distill The Stooges, Sabbath and the Stones' darker moments on this fuzz-heavy third album. As Schemel puts it: "Songs come from other worlds, you just have to tune into the right radio signal to dial them in. Our signal happens to be in a 1970 Dodge Charger Spaceship."

Adrianne Lenker
ABYSSKISS
SADDLE CREEK

Big Thief frontwoman and guitarist Adrianne Lenker has collected these songs over the last two years touring with the excellent Brooklyn band. Soothing, crisp acoustic playing accompanies Lenker's ever-alluring voice and the writing is as unflinching as her Big Thief material, with titles such as *Womb* and *Cradle* touching on familiar, emotionally raw subjects.

Tim Hecker
KONOYO
KRANKY

Canadian 'experiential' composer Hecker is a master manipulator of sound who has collaborated with Sigur Rós and Jóhann Jóhannsson. For this ninth album, a trip to Tokyo yields a meditation on negative space that manipulates traditional sound into transmuted forms and morphing textures; it's an avant-garde journey that sounds as though your hi-fi is deep in REM sleep.

Julia Holter
AVIARY
DOMINO

LA composer Julia Holter describes the follow-up to 2015's *Have You In My Wilderness as* "the cacophony of the mind in a melting world". That's an apposite description for a challenging and inventive record that crams in myriad ideas and changes in musical direction. Strings, synths and percussion combine with Holter's operatic vocal on a widescreen journey.

Richard Reed Parry
QUIET RIVER OF DUST VOL. 1
ANTI- RECORDS

As if Arcade Fire had not ventured into sufficiently experimental territory, the first in a two-part series from Richard Reed Parry is inspired by Japanese death poems and British folk. These songs began to take form 10 years ago when Reed Parry visited a Japanese monastery after an Arcade Fire tour. They manage to be both gently meditative and gloriously expansive.

Matthew Dear
BUNNY
GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

Ghostly stalwart Matthew Dear returns with his first album in six years (although he's released several singles and a techno album as Audion during that time). Pop hooks skewed through an electro lens and topped with Dear's intimate vocals make for a richly detailed listen, especially on the euphoric shapeshifter *Bunny's Dream* and Tegan And Sara-featuring *Bad Ones*.

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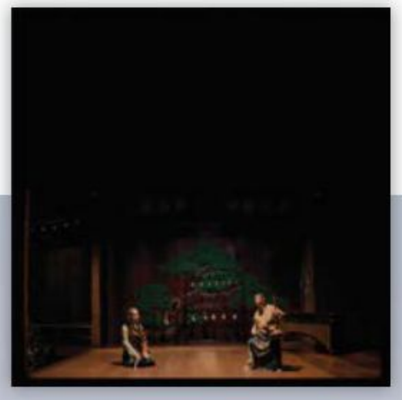
Genre Hopping

Japanese new-age electronica

Beyond the cult of the Yellow Magic Orchestra, Japan has a rich tradition of long-forgotten experimental ambient music. **Chris Parkin** uncovers some rare vinyl gems from the East



Yellow Magic Orchestra have been cult stars far beyond Japan for many years, thanks to the patronage of Bowie and Eno, but a few years ago, their lesser-known 80s peers began to see their own records disappearing from bargain bins and selling for huge amounts on the second-hand market. Tokyo vinyl obsessives such as Organic Music's Chee Shimizu were unearthing long-forgotten records and hipping shops and labels in the West to this otherworldly strand of minimalist wonder. With new-age music fashionable again in a tumultuous world, Discogs has recorded a huge rise in searches for Japanese music, and what started out as a slow drip of reissues has turned into a deluge.

WITH NEW-AGE MUSIC FASHIONABLE AGAIN IN A TUMULTUOUS WORLD, DISCOGS HAS RECORDED A HUGE RISE IN SEARCHES FOR JAPANESE MUSIC

The key moment was the 2017 release of Midori Takada's 1983 album *Through The Looking Glass* by Palto Flats and WRWTFWW. Its austere yet dazzling refraction of trance-inducing marimba through minimalism's crystal-clear lens got people hooked. In June this year, WRWTFWW reissued the prettily hypnotic, but more muscular 1981 debut album by Takada's MKWAJU Ensemble, *KI-Motion*. The success of both has reactivated her career. Takada recently released an EP, *Le Renard Bleu*, with Warp's Lafawndah. Inspired by Japanese and Senegalese folk tales, and featuring all the hallmarks of Takada's sound, her first new music for 20 years is as bewitching as ever.

Another important moment in the resurgence of this forgotten music was Hiroshi Yoshimura's 1982 album, *Music For Nine Post Cards*. An album of spacious and tranquil electronica, it was released by Empire Of Signs, a label co-founded by Spencer Doran, who applies the same pristine stillness of Yoshimura and Takada's music to his own musical project, Visible Cloaks.

Doran is responsible, too, for putting together a long-planned compilation of Japanese ambient, environment and new-age music for Light In The Attic as part of a Japan archival series that launched with a trawl through Japanese acid folk, *Even A Tree Can Shed Tears: Japanese Folk & Rock 1969-1973*.

Light In The Attic is also currently busy promoting the music of Haruomi Hosono. The grandson of the only Japanese survivor of the Titanic, he's pals with Van Dyke Parks, produced hundreds of songs for Japanese pop idols, and founded two key record labels. He was also a member of the Yellow Magic Orchestra alongside his old friend, Ryuichi Sakamoto. And yet his solo music is relatively unknown outside of Japan. His first outing, 1973's *Hosono House*, is a screwy Japanese Americana curio, while 1978's *Paraiso* is a tropical blues affair that pitches up somewhere between New Orleans and downtown Tokyo. But it's his synth work, signposting his later excursions into deep ambience, that dazzles most: the neon-psychedelic synth-pop of 1978's *Cochin Moon*; 1982's playfully bonkers *Philharmony*, made with just synths and samples; and 1989's *Omni Sight Seeing*, a rich, blend of traditional Algerian and Japanese music, lounge-lizard jazz and electronica. With rich contextualisation, these five reissues, previously unavailable outside Japan, explain much about the unique creative approach of many of Japan's best music-makers. ●

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HOW TO BUY HIGH-END TURNTABLES

If money isn't too tight to mention and you're looking to splash out on a top-quality turntable, then you'd best let resident hi-fi guru **Paul Rigby** guide you around what's on the market

Well, this should be pretty easy, shouldn't it? No limit in terms of build budget from the manufacturer, top-quality parts included and you've got a big pot of cash to splurge on a great turntable. The world's your oyster, isn't it? Yes… and no.

Buying a high-end turntable is a big step. When I say "high-end", I mean a turntable from around £4,000 upwards. Give or take. So that's the first item on the agenda, right then and there. Money. Unless you are in the fortunate position where flashing £10,000 or so on a dream machine is about as painful as buying a tin of baked beans, then spending serious cash on a turntable is a big step. If you are about to take that big step, congratulations. Read on.

Why is it such a big decision? Surely, all turntables that are priced in the stratosphere are wonderfully designed, superbly put together and sound incredible? You'd think that, wouldn't you? It's not always so, I have to tell you. This is why, even at this level, it pays to shop around.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Firstly, before considering the key features, look at the seemingly boring aspects. Think about the footprint. If you have a particular turntable in mind, ask yourself, 'how much space does this thing occupy?'. High-end decks often arrive with sprawling plinths, arms that hang off the side, detached motors and external power supplies that are sometimes very large indeed. Make sure that you can handle the space.

INSTALLATION

Next, how easy is your dream turntable to install? And, more than that, how long will it take to tweak the deck so that it's fulfilling your sonic fantasies? If a turntable installation is fiddly – and high-end turntables can be very fiddly during installation – is that down to you, or will the dealer sort it for you? If you're in the frame, can you install it at all? Do you have the know-how and confidence? If the dealer is doing the job, make sure you talk to him before and during the installation. A lot. Make sure you ask all about the nuances of this turntable. Does it need particular maintenance after six or 12 months? More oil on the bearing, for example? If so, how do you do that? Does the turntable come off the boil in performance terms after years of use and, if so, how do you tweak it to maximise its performance again?

In short, get to know any little foibles inherent within the design.

DESIGN

Find out everything you can about your target turntable's components. For example, if the turntable has an expensively designed and finely tuned, yet highly sensitive, sprung chassis and your listening room is sitting on suspended wooden floorboards, then you may find the slightest move will cause the needle to jump out of the groove through floor vibration. A wall shelf would cure that problem, but not everyone can go there. My listening room walls are not solid, for example, so I can't install such a shelf. Make sure that the design of the turntable itself will not end up causing you problems once it's in situ.

PRICE

Is the price you pay really the final price? Sometimes, nasty surprises are in store. For example, I have

DOES THE TURNTABLE COME OFF THE BOIL IN PERFORMANCE TERMS AFTER YEARS OF USE AND, IF SO, HOW DO YOU TWEAK IT TO MAXIMISE ITS PERFORMANCE AGAIN?

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reviewed turntables that offered a superlative design and a world-class tonearm, but with a cartridge that was frankly inadequate.

I remember reviewing one in particular that was priced not far from £10,000, but was topped off by a £200 cartridge. The resultant sound was distinctly average, because the cartridge itself was incapable of excelling in such an unbalanced and otherwise rarified system. Hence, to get the turntable running at optimum levels required a further £1,500 to £2,000 to be spent on a quality cartridge. It was only at this point that the turntable worked as we'd ideally want. The issue, then? You're spending £5,000 on a turntable and you think the job is done. Then you might find out that it isn't, but you've already committed to the turntable. You could end up spending £6,500 to £7,000 and, if you're on a tight budget, this sort of surprise can produce untold stress. This is why it's important to do your research before splashing out on what you hope will be your dream turntable and musical companion for many years to come.

When it comes to usability and design you still can't beat solid engineering

THE BIZARRE

The problem that can accompany the benefit of a higher build budget is that some turntable designers get carried away on ideas that never quite pan out, or drive into a dead end. And as with any major purchase of this kind, problems sometimes only come to light after you've spent your hard-earned cash. While many high-end models look and sound amazing, are infused with innovation and drip 'cool', that doesn't necessarily exempt them from components breaking, and spares can still be tough to find. Of course, engineering innovation, lateral thinking and designers' freedom with the goal of a sound that takes your breath away should be celebrated, but there is still a balance to be found – and you cannot beat solid engineering when it comes to design, usability and longevity.

HIGH-END TURNTABLE BUYER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

With those warnings out of the way, which high-end turntable should you buy? Here's a broad selection from three different price bands. This is just a suggested list of some of our favourites. There are lots of others that we've not been able to include due to space reasons. Why not write in and tell us about your favourites so that other readers can be made aware of those too? All prices are correct when going to press. ●

UNFINISHED BUSINESS £3,000-£9,000

Turntables where the retail price point may be just the start of your journey

TECHNICS SL-1200G

PRICE £3,000

WWW.TECHNICS.COM/UK

One of the best direct-drive turntables in the world, featuring superb engineering – but not straight out of the box. Even if you don't upgrade the arm (and you should consider that), this is a starter package. With the additions of a new headshell, platter mat and stabiliser, £1,500 cartridge, better phono and mains cables, the sky's the limit. Final price? At least £6,000. With a new arm? Around £8,500.

ROKSAN XERXES 20 PLUS

PRICE £7,800

WWW.ROKSAN.CO.UK

The Xerxes includes a VCS 2S control system, a separate box featuring a speed control system, plus a Nima arm and Corus 2 cartridge but, to really get the best out of it, I'd suggest upgrading the tonearm and cartridge. So add at least another £3,000 to that price for optimum results.

MCINTOSH MT5

PRICE £9,000

WWW.JORDANACOUSTICS.CO.UK

The MT5 provides a strong and forthright design, but it requires a cartridge of quality if it's going to show its true colours and achieve ideal sonic balance. Replace the supplied sample with a new cart. When you do, the MT5 absolutely soars in sonic terms. Add £1,500 to £2,000 for that cartridge.

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SUB-£10K £6,000-£8,500

High-end turntables shipping to you for less than £10,000

VPI
PRIME SIGNATURE

PRICE £6,000

WWW.VPIINDUSTRIES.COM

There are several models of tank that would feel slightly uneasy standing next to the excellent VPI Prime Signature, such is the sturdy build quality on show here. But it's the sound quality that is the gold-star element in the Signature Prime's armoury. It's as solid as a rock and oozes detail, but blends this successfully with impressive clarity.

MICHELL
ORBE

PRICE £6,000

WWW.MICHELL-ENGINEERING.CO.UK

Michell is one of the most respected hi-fi outfits in the world and a company that still works out of an engineering shed that looks as if it has time-warped back to the 50s. The Orbe is the company's flagship, but you tend to buy it without a cartridge. A rather nice Koetsu Black K would suit the turntable well, so add £2,000 to reach the £6,000 mark.

VERTERE
MG-1

PRICE £8,500

VERTEREACOUSTICS.COM

The stylish MG-1 arrives with the MkII SG-1 motor drive and Vertere SG-1 tonearm. Looking at the design, you'll note the two-layer plinth and sub-chassis, featured to reduce veiling noise. When running, the turntable offers plenty of pace, but also very impressive dynamic range. The price above includes £2,000 for a suitable cartridge.

TO THE STARS! £10,300-£35,000

Dream machines that exceed that magical £10,000 mark

ORIGIN
LIVE SOVEREIGN

PRICE £10,300

WWW.ORIGINLIVE.COM

One of the best turntables in the world and criminally under-recognised to boot, the Live Sovereign has been the subject of recent motor, power supply and speed control upgrades. It's not one of *LLV*'s favourite decks for nothing: the sound is stunning. An incredible design with amazing insight in sonic terms.

AVID
ACUTUS SP

PRICE £13,500

WWW.AVIDHIFI.CO.UK

Again, one of the best turntable designs in the world. You can upgrade the power supply to Reference standard to lift it into the £20k category, but the standard model is just superb. Robust, beautiful engineering and a well-designed sprung chassis. A genuine dream machine.

KRONOS
PRO

PRICE £35,000

KRONOSAUDIO.COM

Utilises a range of innovative design points, including two identical high-mass platters, one above the other, rotating in opposite directions at the same speed to remove torsion effects. Arrives within an imposing and rather impressive structure, and with a similarly impressive sound performance.

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DREAM MACHINES

WILSON AUDIO TUNETOT

FROM £10,998 PER PAIR *www.wilsonaudio.com*

Wilson Audio brings its unique design innovations to the bookshelf speaker format. **Paul Rigby** takes a closer listen to the company's smallest model yet...

1 HANDSOME CAB
The cabinet is made from Wilson Audio's proprietary X-material and S-material composites, incorporating a 146mm mid/bass driver and 25mm tweeter.

2 ALL ABOUT THAT BASE
The units come with an optional TuneTot ISOBase platform, made from a sandwich of Wilson's proprietary composites and newly designed polymers.

One of the most expensive bookshelf speakers on the market, this little sonic monster dazzles with technological tweaks and amazes with innovation. The aim is to isolate the active loudspeaker from its environment. Devised by Wilson's Special Applications Engineering Team, you'll find an asymmetric cabinet design here: no two internal surfaces are parallel, in order to keep veiling noise down, plus there are stainless-steel spikes to isolate the speaker. The TuneTot Grille is an optional extra, made from "acoustically transparent" fabric with a frame milled from Wilson Audio's X-material composite.

3 RING THE CHANGES
Those who prefer to expose the drivers rather than use a grille can instead purchase the TuneTot Ring, milled from 6061-T6 aluminium, to cover the mid/bass driver's mounting hardware.

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PRO-JECT JUKE BOX S2

MODERN ALL-IN-ONE MUSIC-CENTRE DESIGN

£599; JUKE BOX S2, SPEAKER BOX 5 S2, CONNECT-IT LS, DAMP-IT SYSTEM £999 *www.henleyaudio.co.uk 01235 511166*

What have we here? A modern version of the old-fashioned 'music centre' bundle? A nostalgic **Paul Rigby** reviews the Pro-Ject Juke Box S2

In the 70s, brands such as Sansui, Bush, Ferguson and Hitachi offered a host of music centres featuring a turntable bundled with a tape deck, radio and more.

With the resurgence of vinyl as a physical format, this music-centre approach has once again become popular. Some non-audiophiles just want to play their records without unnecessary faffing about in terms of separates, cables, set-up advice and the rest; others are nervous of technology, while some are not that interested in hi-fi and – unlike myself, for example – actually have a life. To help service this demand, Pro-Ject already offer a low-cost Juke Box E for £369. You can add a pair of matched speakers to the 'E' for a total of £500 – great for those on a budget, for second systems or for students.

The healthy sales of the Juke Box E have prompted Pro-Ject to look afresh at the music-centre format, which is where the Juke Box S2 slots in. The S2 should appeal to the same sector, but specifically targets those who value interior design and image as much as technology and sound quality.

So, what you get with the S2 is a 'lifestyle' product, wrapped up in a nice finish, with hi-fi quality components.

Compared to the 'E', the S2 gives you a better-quality platter of an acrylic construction, along with Ortofon's Pick it 25A cartridge. The turntable also arrives in a wooden frame (ie, veneer over MDF, of either walnut or eucalyptus).

In terms of the build budget for the S2, you might be surprised to hear that the wooden finish demands the majority of the cash resources.

Pro-Ject's Juke Box S2 is a return to the principles of the all-in-one music centres of the 1970s

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The S2 comes in walnut or eucalyptus veneer; the readout shows your current mode and volume

THE INS AND OUTS

Inside, you'll find a 50-watt amplifier and Bluetooth. Weighing in at 5kg, the belt-driven, twin-speed turntable features two rocker switches under the plinth. One supplies the power to the amplifier, while another moves the platter on the turntable. On the front is a multi-function rotary volume knob/input selector/standby controller.

On the near-right of the upper plinth, a readout provides the current status of the S2. Hence, you can see quickly what source mode you are in and the current status of the volume.

On the rear are connections to an external phono amplifier, four basic speaker terminals, variable outputs (ie, to powered speakers), plus fixed outputs (ie, to a headphone amplifier). A line input pairing is available for a CD player, TV or somesuch. Using this, you can connect a secondary source and use the Juke Box S2 as an amplifier for your speakers. A power supply plugs into the rear and a remote control is supplied, too. The beautifully finished speakers are two-way stand-mounted designs.

Sound quality on the cool bossa nova of Astrud Gilberto and the synth pop of Deux, via the Pro-Ject speakers, is interesting. There are no especially harsh sonic gremlins and everything behaves pretty well. The personality is a bit on the 'damped' side, with a lack of air and space in the midrange and a slight warming in the lower frequencies, but there's plenty of detail on offer and the sound is listenable. Importantly, the Pro-Ject speakers are perfect for this system and I would stick with them. Don't get clever and 'upgrade': you may unleash a can of sonic worms and faults may begin to crop up. The matched speakers play a big, big part in the S2's sound quality.

This is a lifestyle product. It should be viewed as a such and heard as such. Audiophiles should look at Pro-Ject's separates, if sound quality is paramount. For a lifestyle product, the price is rather high, because of the focus on 'looks', but the S2 is stylish, compact, works well and the sound quality is decent. It's perfect for those people who see the S2 as a piece of furniture that makes a nice noise and offers entertainment convenience. ●

VERDICT

PROS

FEATURES

DECENT SOUND

COMPONENT QUALITY

EASE OF USE

PLUG AND GO

CONS

'LIFESTYLE' COSTS

SCORE

28/33⅓

THE S2 IS STYLISH, COMPACT, WORKS WELL AND THE SOUND QUALITY IS PRETTY DECENT… THE MATCHED SPEAKERS PLAY A BIG PART IN ITS SOUND

The S2's inputs and outputs offer flexibility, and there's Bluetooth connectivity, too

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The TD 295 Mk 4 is poised midway between the lifestyle and audiophile camps

THORENS TD 295 MK 4

TWIN-SPEED, BELT-DRIVEN, SEMI-AUTOMATIC TURNTABLE

£699 *www.thorens.com 01425 460760*

Looking for a no-nonsense, no-fuss turntable that actually sounds good? **Paul Rigby** takes a look at one candidate – the Thorens TD 295 Mk 4

You see, a lot of people just don't want to do it… spend half their life researching hi-fi equipment, that is.

Yet others, including sad cases such as myself, will strive to extract the n-th degree from our music. We will invest thousands in kit just so that we can hear Bing Crosby playing with his spare change in his pocket as he sings (he used to do that sort of thing, which drove producers crazy), or experience the reverb on a cymbal for an extra half beat.

Most sane people just want to listen to their music. And why not? Music is what this is all about, surely, not the tools that produce it, for goodness sake?

That's not to say that those same people wouldn't like a decent sound from their kit. You don't want to shell out hard-earned cash for rubbish, now, do you? So the Mk 4 lies somewhere in between: for music fans who want to have their cake (ie, plug-and-play, easy-to-use hi-fi) and would also like to eat it with a big spoon (ie, hi-fi that offers a good level of sound quality).

Turntable outfit Thorens have recognised this market sector, which is why they offer

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THE BASS IS SO SECURE, THE MUSIC SOUNDS AS IF IT HAS BEEN TETHERED TO THE GROUND BY TENT ROPES. THE REASON? THAT HEAVY PLINTH

the TD 295 Mk 4. The Swiss-based outfit regularly team up with other third-party outfits to produce sub-£1,000 turntables but put them together with a distinctive Thorens flair.

This belt-driven, dual-speed turntable spans 430x145x365mm and weighs a healthy 8.5kg – partly because of the wood-veneer-covered MDF plinth and partly thanks to a weighty aluminium plate underneath it. A speed changer sits on top of the plinth, while the aluminium platter is damped by a felt mat.

The TP 41 tonearm is a modification of Pro-ject's original Series 9 design, with a thinner, lower-mass arm tube carrying an Audio-Technica AT95E cartridge sporting an elliptical stylus, plus a weight and thread anti-skate.

STOPPED IN ITS TRACKS

The rear of the plinth holds the hinges for the lid, while that area also features the switch-mode power-supply socket, plus sockets for detachable phono cables, so you can upgrade the cables if you wish. Thorens supply a pair of decent cables from the box, though. The 'lifestyle' element of the turntable's design is catered for by a semi-automatic action, but it doesn't lift the arm from the end of the LP groove. Instead, the speed is killed and the deck turns off, leaving the stylus on the record. You still have to lift the arm off the record manually. Not exactly convenient, then, but a better solution, sonically, than a traditional semi-automatic with built-in arm-lifting gears. The latter harms sound quality, because it introduces veiling noise.

I play a mixture of Eydie Gormé vocal jazz, plus selections from The Cure. Sound quality is fascinating, because of the TD 295's incredibly solid lower frequencies. It has a direct-drive-like effect. The bass is so secure, the music sounds as if it has been tethered to the ground by tent ropes. The reason? That heavy plinth. It's a growing Thorens trademark, and a good one. That massive bass effect does warm the output, rolling off the upper mids while slicing off fine detail and extended dynamics. That said, because of the audiophile components that are part of the package, there's still plenty of fine detail on offer.

Don't see this turntable as a direct competitor for the Regas, Pro-Jects and Funk Firms of this world. The Thorens TD 295 Mk 4 is not aimed at the audiophile; it's aimed squarely at the lifestyle buyer who wants the best sound quality possible, without having to compromise too much either way. As such, the TD 295 does an excellent job. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
LIFESTYLE BALANCE	WARMING MIDRANGE
BASS OUTPUT	
EASY TO USE	
SOLID BUILD	

SCORE
29/33⅓

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The Vinylist
CRAIG SWEETIN

To be in with a chance of seeing your record collection in *Long Live Vinyl*, email your details and a picture to gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

Committed vinyl collector **Craig Sweetin** is lucky enough to work from home; he's even luckier that his home office also doubles up as his music room

What was the first record you bought?
"I started off being given loads of records by older cousins when I was young – the first one was definitely Adam And The Ants' *Prince Charming* album – and then I moved onto buying cassettes when I was 11 or 12, two for a fiver from the local market. But the first record I can genuinely remember buying with my own money was *The Circus* by Erasure when I was 13. Not particularly cool I'm afraid, but I did love them at the time."

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"Anything and everything really, but mostly it's what most people would term indie-rock or alternative I suppose. In my teens, I was obsessed with EMF, Jesus Jones, PWEI and Carter USM, and then later on Britpop was timed perfectly with me being at university and spending all my grant money in a fantastic record shop in Paisley called Stereo 1 (sadly gone now). At the moment, I'm listening to a lot of Stone Roses, Teenage Fanclub, Jesus & Mary Chain, Faith No More, Spiritualized, and anything released on Sunstone records."

How many records do you have?
"According to Discogs, it's approaching 2,200 records, and I've got about 200 CDs. I never really stopped buying records thankfully, although I did go through a phase where I was predominantly buying CDs for a few years in the early/mid 90s. I had a mass clear-out of CDs, though, about three years ago and used the proceeds to fund some otherwise prohibitively expensive vinyl. There's a shelf devoted to records for my seven-year-old daughter, which is slowly growing – the brainwashing is almost complete."

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"Nothing hugely valuable – I've got The Beatles' mono boxset, which cost a few hundred and an original *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness*. Apart from that, it's my mid-90s collection, which if taken as a collection would probably be most valuable. There are first presses of all the early Oasis albums and singles, a few PJ Harvey albums, KLF, all the Ocean Colour Scene albums, and copies of the Blur singles that Banksy did the sleeves for."

What's the Holy Grail record that you'd most like to own?
"I'm quite lucky in that gradually over time everything on my 'wants' list is now being re-released – I just picked up a copy of The Breeders' *Last Splash*, and I've finally filled the holes in my Teenage Fanclub collection with the re-release of the Creation-era albums. Having said that, I do hanker after a copy of the Oasis live album *Familiar To Millions*, and *The Contino Sessions* by Death In Vegas. If I could actually find a copy anywhere, then I'd like to get the *Back In Denim* album, too – but I've yet to stumble across one."

What's your listening setup?
"Not excessively expensive to be honest, although not cheap as chips either. I've got a Technics SL-1200 MK2, which I've had for 12 years now and frankly might actually outlive me. I've got a Marantz PM6005 amp and pair of floor-standing Monitor Audio speakers, and then a cheap Technics CD player, which I picked up off eBay and an ancient NAD tuner, which I love. It still gives off a warm green glow when you switch it on. I'm lucky that I work from home 90% of the time, so my home office is also my record room." ●

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SONY MUSIC

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